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THE

LIFE OF DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.



H. WARREN.

J. COOPER, Sc.

SCENE IN THE JOURNEY TO THE HEBRIDES.



THE

Life

of

Dr. Samuel Johnson.

BY

THE REV. J. F. RUSSELL, B.C.L.

INCUMBENT OF ST. JAMES'S, ENFIELD.



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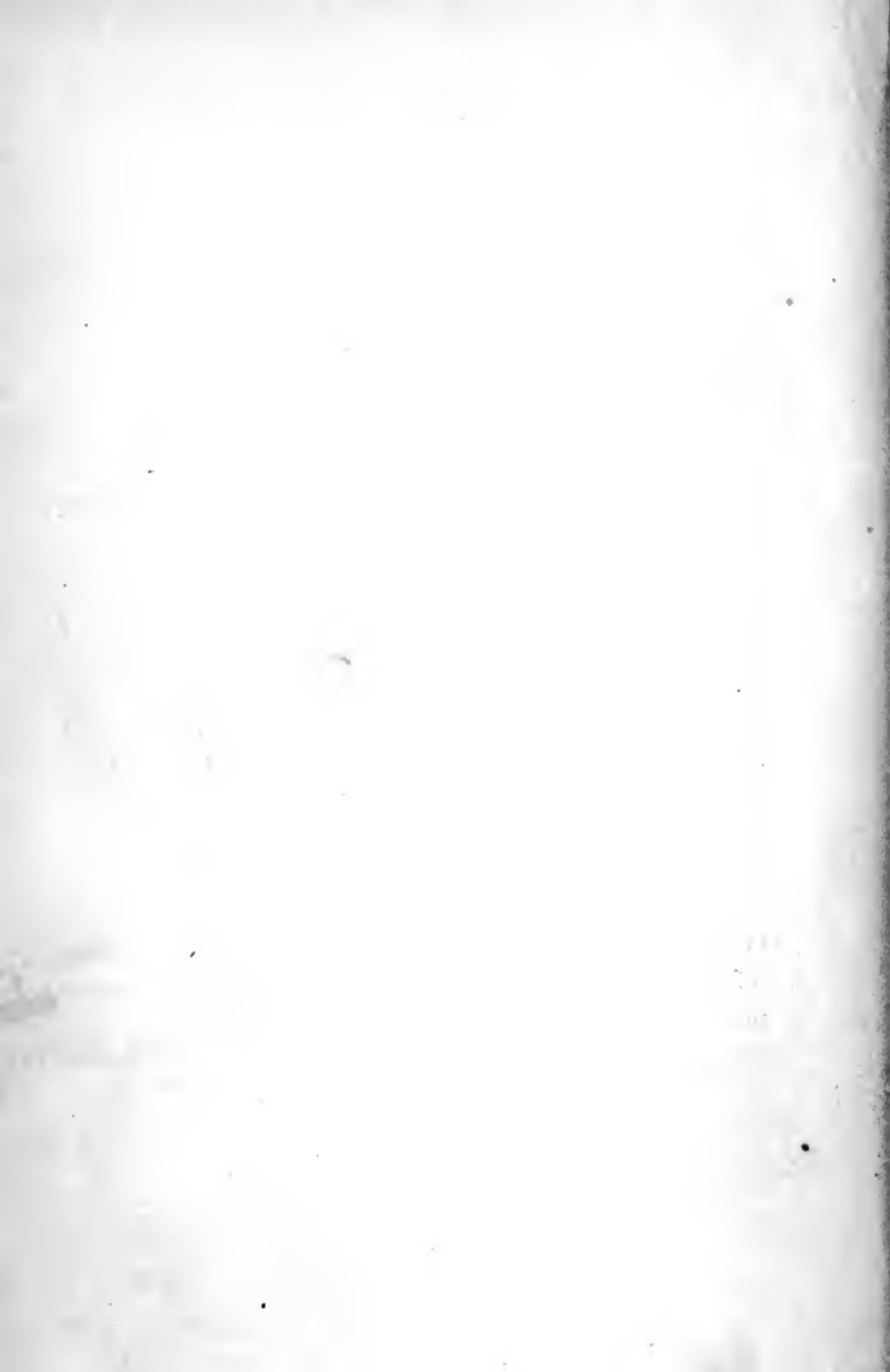
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THE volume here presented to the public does not pretend to originality of material, but simply of arrangement. It is designed to serve rather as an ample manual than as a complete memorial of the remarkable individual whom it portrays; and is intended chiefly for such readers as may not have leisure or inclination for the perusal of Boswell's celebrated but voluminous biography.

The chief materials for the present memoir have, of course, been derived from the work just mentioned; but many have also been drawn from other sources. Considerable pains has been taken to put together in an orderly arrangement the chief events in the life of the great Moralist, as well as the more remarkable anecdotes and sayings which are recorded of him. The task was one of some difficulty. How far the attempt has been successful is left to the candid judgment of the public to determine.

J. F. R.

Enfield Highway.





Contents.

CHAPTER I.

Johnson's birth and parentage. His infant precocity. Taken to London to be touched for the "king's evil." Goes to school at Lichfield. Particulars of his boyish days. Removes to the school of Stourbridge, and is admitted into the best society of the place. He quits Stourbridge, and "loiters" for two years at home. Singular example of his casual reading at this period. Specimens of his early poems. He enters at Pembroke College, Oxford. Neglects lectures. Translates Pope's *Messiah* into Latin. His habits and course of study at the University. He quits Oxford. Is overwhelmed with hypochondria. Becomes religious. Loses his father. Is appointed usher of Market Bosworth school. Goes to Birmingham. Translates Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia*. Returns to Lichfield. Writes to Mr. Cave. Is an unsuccessful candidate for the mastership of Solihull school. His youthful loves, and forbidding appearance. He marries. Opens a private seminary near Lichfield. His pupils. He begins *Irene* Page 1

CHAPTER II.

Johnson accompanies David Garrick to London, and lodges in Exeter Street. Lives on fourpence-halfpenny per day. Retires to Greenwich and writes *Irene*. Proposes a translation of the *History of the Council of Trent*. Returns to Lichfield, and completes his tragedy. Removes with his wife to London. Contributes Debates in Parliament to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Publishes *London*, a poem. Does not succeed in obtaining the degree of Master of Arts. His extreme indigence. He publishes *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage*, and *Marmor Norfolciense*. Knocks down the bookseller Osborne. Evinces his affection for his mother. Publishes the *Life of Richard Savage*. Publishes *Miscellaneous Observations on Macbeth*, and *Proposals for a new edition of Shakespeare*. Puts forth the Pro-

spectus of his <i>Dictionary</i> . His method of compiling his <i>Dictionary</i> . He visits Tunbridge Wells. Founds a club in Ivy Lane. His con- versation. Writes <i>Life of Roscommon</i> , Preface to Dodsley's <i>Preceptor</i> , and <i>Vision of Theodore the Hermit</i> . Publishes the <i>Vanity of Human Wishes</i>	Page 18
--	---------

CHAPTER III.

<i>Irene</i> performed at Drury Lane. Johnson frequents the green-room. Publishes the <i>Rambler</i> . Writes a Prologue to <i>Comus</i> . Anna Wil- liams. Death of Johnson's wife. The funeral sermon. Inscription. Epitaph. Robert Levett. Sir Joshua Reynolds. Bennet Langton. Topham Beauclerk. Johnson contributes to the <i>Adventurer</i> . Writes <i>Life of Cave</i> . Visits Oxford. Obtains the degree of Master of Arts. Publishes his <i>Dictionary</i> . Writes a severe letter to Lord Chesterfield. Is arrested for debt. He contributes to the <i>Universal Visitor</i> . De- fends the use of tea. His excessive fondness for that beverage. He commences the <i>Idler</i> . Death of Johnson's mother. Passages from his letters to her	Page 38
---	---------

CHAPTER IV.

Johnson publishes <i>Rasselas</i> . Breaks up his establishment. Goes to Ox- ford. Francis Barber. Extract from Johnson's <i>Meditations</i> . John- son visits Lichfield. Receives a pension from George III. Accom- panies Sir Joshua Reynolds into Devonshire. Becomes acquainted with Boswell. Oliver Goldsmith. The <i>Vicar of Wakefield</i> . Johnson's Ja- cobitism. His definition of Whiggism. His library. Subordination and equality. Johnson's fondness for the society of the young. Melan- choly. Mrs. Macaulay. Influence of the weather. Fleet Street. A "woman preaching." Convocation. Johnson accompanies Boswell to Harwich. His love of eating. His refutation of Bishop Berkeley's theory. His mode of life during 1763. Visit to Lancashire. The "Literary Club." Return of Johnson's hypochondria. His odd ges- tures and peculiarities. Visit to Dr. Percy and Cambridge. Extracts from Johnson's <i>Meditations</i>	Page 53
---	---------

CHAPTER V.

Johnson receives the degree of Doctor of Laws. His prayer preparatory to engaging in politics. Publishes his <i>Shakespeare</i> . Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. Pope and Dryden. Goldsmith's <i>Traveller</i> . Education. The Law. Dishonesty of Deists. Happiness. Convents. Courting the great. Johnson's roughness. He contributes to Mrs. Williams's <i>Mis-</i>
--

cellanies. Dedications. Johnson's interview with the King. Catherine Chambers. Memoranda. Boswell follows Johnson to Oxford. Practice of the law. Lichfield. Future life of brutes. Johnson sends Barber to school. He is appointed Professor of Ancient Literature. Visits Oxford, Lichfield, and Brighton. Sunday. Good breeding. Whitfield's oratory. History. Duration of Parliament. London life. Second marriages. Garrick's "fond vivacity." Waiting dinner. Goldsmith's dress. Congreve. Shakespeare. Petitioning. Feeling for others. Johnson appears as a witness in a court of justice. Tea with Mrs. Williams. Schemes of political improvement. Romanism. Presbyterians. Approach of death. Johnson's quarrel and reconciliation with Boswell Page 72

CHAPTER VI.

Johnson publishes the *False Alarm*. Mr. Wilkes. Johnson suffers from rheumatism. Visits Lichfield and Ashbourne. Publishes *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting the Falkland Islands*. Mr. Thrale endeavours unsuccessfully to get him into Parliament. Johnson goes into Staffordshire and Derbyshire. His cat, Hodge. Popular election of the Clergy. Subscription to the Articles. The future state. Purgatory. Public amusements. Bishops in Parliament. Inequality of Clerical livings. Duelling. Methodists. Learning to read. Extracts from Johnson's *Meditations*. Drinking. Fleas. Lord Mansfield. Authors' ms. Johnson visits Lichfield and Ashbourne. Masquerades. Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney. Inequality and subordination. Boswell elected a member of the Literary Club. Lay patrons. Toleration. Johnson rebukes Goldsmith for impertinence. Toleration of Socinian preachers. Johnson's astonishing fit of laughter . Page 92

CHAPTER VII.

Johnson visits Edinburgh. Scottish cleanliness. Trial by duel. Sir William Forbes. Independency of Scotland. St. Giles's church. Evil spirits and witchcraft. Sketch of Johnson and Boswell. Leith. Suicide. St. Andrews. Alteration of manners. John Knox. Retirement from the world. Scruples of conscience. Habit of fast composition. Montrose. Churchmen in Scotland like Christians in Turkey. Lord Monboddo. Gory. Aberdeen. Johnson's admirable pronunciation. Ellon. Slaines Castle. Earl of Errol. Connexions of relationship. Elgin. Moral evil. Mr. Kenneth M'Aulay. Seat of the Thane of Cawdor. The English clergy. Creeds and confessions. Presbyterian "family prayers." Fort George. Inverness. "English chapel." Lochness. A hovel and its inhabitants. Glenmorison.

Johnson entertains a party of soldiers in a barn. Cocker's Arithmetic. Sleeping apartment. Johnson first conceives the thought of writing his *Journey to the Hebrides*. Auchnasheal. Rattakin. Johnson rebukes Boswell for his incivility. Glenelg. A Cyclops. Reposing "like a gentleman" Page 110

CHAPTER VIII.

Johnson's reconciliation with Boswell. Skye. Sir Alexander Macdonald. Johnson indulges his bearish propensities. Dr. Cheyne's admirable rule. Corrichatachin. The second sight. M'Queen. Malcolm Macleod. The approach to Rasay. The ruined chapel. Kingsburg. Flora Macdonald. Prince Charles Edward's bedstead. Dunvegan castle. Lady Macleod. Keeping a seraglio. Johnson's birthday. Laziness worse than the toothache. Ulinish. Anecdote of Garrick. Man in a jail better off than one in a ship. Johnson rails at the Scots. Talisker. The Scottish "Clergy." Johnson a fox-hunter. Boswell becomes inebriate, and makes a riot. Johnson makes himself agreeable to the Highland ladies. Dr. Young. Doddridge's family motto. Rough passage to Col. Hector M'Lean. Johnson's mode of arguing Page 128

CHAPTER IX.

Isle of Mull. Johnson rides a sheltie. Loses his staff. Ulva. Example of second sight. Inchkenneth. Sir Allen M'Lean. Boswell afraid of ghosts. The woods of Mull. Icolmkill. Moy. Johnson's description of his ride to Inverary. His *Meditation on a Pudding*. Duke of Argyll. Boswell snubbed by the Duchess. Rosedow. Glasgow. Auchinleck and its laird. Johnson's altercation with Boswell's father. His consistency. Edinburgh. Two of Johnson's speeches. Johnson returns to London. His opinion that Mrs. Boswell "preferred his room to his company." Boswell's apology for his wife. Johnson's forgiving disposition. He begins his *Journey to the Hebrides*. Death of Goldsmith. Johnson makes a tour through Wales. Writes the *Patriot*. Journey to the Hebrides. Ossian. Johnson's letter to Macpherson. Instances of his resolution. He provides himself with a prodigious club Page 144

CHAPTER X.

Johnson visits Oxford. Publishes *Taxation no Tyranny*. Receives the diploma of Doctor of Laws from Oxford. His opinion of Charles II., James II., and George I. Patriotism. Happiness. Johnson fasts on Good Friday. Extracts from his private register. His breakfast ap-

paratus. Alchymy. Johnson makes his annual ramble to the middle counties. He goes to France. Fontainebleau. Paris. English Benedictines. Indelicacy of the French. Boswell arrives in London. Boswell accompanies Johnson to Oxford. Pembroke College. English Inns. Birmingham. Church festivals. Lichfield. Mr. Jackson. Instance of Johnson's humanity. His letter to Mrs. Thrale on the death of her son. Ashbourne. Dr. Taylor. Dr. Butler. Extracts from Johnson's *Prayers and Meditations*. Gloomy penitence. The *Spectator*. Johnson goes to Bath and Bristol. Rowley's poetry. Thomas Chatterton. St. Mary, Redcliff. Johnson returns to London. Dines with John Wilkes. Foote. Scotland and Boswell Page 160

CHAPTER XI.

Johnson's anxiety to attain higher literary excellence. He spends six weeks at Brighton. Suffers from bodily and mental indisposition. Omits church on Sundays. Engages to write prefaces to an edition of the English Poets. Furnishes the edition of the works of Dr. Pearce with a dedication to George III. Writes a prologue to *A Word to the Wise*. His interference in behalf of Dr. Dodd. His solemn letter to Dodd. His benevolent exertions for Isaac de Groot. Johnson goes to Lichfield and Ashbourne. Small salaries of curates. Johnson's opinion of Dr. Taylor. Derby. Johnson's fondness for post-chaise travelling. London. Johnson foiled by a dead cat. Boswell's affection for Johnson inflamed by sweet sounds. Johnson's love of late hours. He returns to London. Visits Brighton. Johnson's bust by Nollekens. "Bow, wow, wow." Mrs. Desmoulins and Co. The quarrels of Johnson's pensioners. Streatham. Attention to truth. Ghosts. Goldsmith's merit as a writer. Old age. Subordination. Shoeblacks. Johnson's altercation with Dr. Percy. Man's free-agency. John Wesley's ghost-story. A pervert to Quakerism. Fleet Street. Oliver Edwards. The Americans. Boswell's "horrible shock." Johnson's drawing-room. Extract from his *Meditations*. "Wasting a fortune." Johnson's conversation Page 180

CHAPTER XII.

Goldsmith's comedies and *Vicar of Wakefield*. The *Beggars' Opera*. Cave. Avarice. The silver-buckle negotiation. The first Whig. Mutual cowardice. Wine. Hogarth's *Modern Midnight Conversation*. Ford's ghost. Manners of the great. Wealthy shopkeepers and their wives. Johnson visits Mr. Langton at Warley-camp. Macbean. Adventures and absurdities of Johnson's pensioners in Bolt Court. Death of Garrick. Fine passages expunged by Goldsmith from his *Vicar of Wakefield*. Extracts from Johnson's *Meditations*. Liberty. Garrick.

- Johnson goes to Lichfield. Mr. Thrale has an apoplectic fit. Appointment of guardians. Johnson has the gout. Miss Graham. Death of Beauclerk. Protestant riots. Extracts from Johnson's letters to Boswell and Strahan. Johnson takes a part in Mr. Thrale's election contest. Extract from Johnson's Meditations *Page 201*

CHAPTER XIII.

- “Liberty and necessity.” *Lives of the Poets*. Mr. Thrale’s library. Johnson’s portrait. His mode of walking. Mr. Thrale’s decease. Johnson’s letter to the widow. Mr. Edwards. Apparitions. Mr. Hollis. A printer’s devil. “A bottom of good sense.” Johnson’s diligent discharge of his duties as Mr. Thrale’s executor. “Squire Dilly.” Mr. Young. Southill. Impressions. Assurance. Luton Hoe. Madame D’Arblay. Extracts from Johnson’s Meditations. His infrequent attendance at the Holy Communion. His visits Oxford, &c. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale *Page 221*

CHAPTER XIV.

- Death of Robert Levett. Johnson’s lines to his memory. Letter to Langton. Letters to Boswell. Johnson visits Oxford. Miss Hannah More. Extracts from Johnson’s letters to Mrs. Thrale. Death of Boswell’s father. Johnson’s remarks on this event. Johnson accompanies Mrs. Thrale to Brighton. Mr. Pepys. Argyll Street. Dr. Parr. Johnson’s severe indisposition. Conversation. Johnson’s enemies. The Scotch. “Complaining of the world.” Origin of language. Dr. Dodd’s picture. Fighting. Distinction between liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching. Johnson’s estrangement from Mrs. Thrale.

Page 236

CHAPTER XV.

- Reading and writing. Story of Foote. Johnson’s advice to Boswell. Places of worship. Johnson’s paralytic attack. His interview with Miss Burney. He visits Mr. Langton. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale. His journey to Salisbury. Decease of Mrs. Williams. Dr. Priestley. Mrs. Siddons’ interview with Johnson. Essex Street Club. Johnson has the asthma and dropsy. His serious conversation with Hawkins. He receives unexpected relief from the dropsy. Letter to Mrs. Thrale. Conduct of elections. Letter to Dr. Taylor. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale. Letter to his god-child. Friendships. Contradiction. Johnson goes to Oxford. Roast mut-

ton. Coarse and refined abuse. Truth. Books. Johnson's last appearance at the Literary Club. Macbean's decease. Invention and sagacity. Johnson's projected Italian tour. Dinner at Sir Joshua Reynolds's	Page 252
---	----------

CHAPTER XVI.

Johnson's letter to Mrs. Thrale on her second marriage. His letter to Lord Thurlow. Epitaph on his wife. Excursion to Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Chatsworth. Lunardi's balloon. Johnson does penance at Uttoxeter. A learned pig. Miss Seward and Johnson. Prayer "against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts." Johnson's conversation with Miss Burney. His will. Prospect of dissolution. Scruples. Petty self-accusation. "Letters in the grave." Satirical poem by Johnson	Page 272
--	----------

CHAPTER XVII.

Johnson destroys his papers. His letter to Mr. Green. He receives the Holy Communion. His prayer. His remark to Dr. Brocklesby. The Parliamentary debates. Johnson's farewell to Mr. Nichols. He dictates his last will to Mr. Strahan. Johnson's male nurse. Dr. Warren and his permission. Dr. Brocklesby's opinion. Johnson becomes perfectly resigned. Dr. Burney's interview with Johnson. Johnson keeps his bed. Refuses to take nourishment. Mr. Windham. Cawston. Miss Morris. Johnson's death. His funeral. His epitaph. His monument in St. Paul's. Statue erected to him at Lichfield	Page 288
--	----------

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

SAYINGS AND DOINGS OF DR. JOHNSON.

Learned ladies. Scotch gooseberries. Scotland. Whining wives. Toryism and Garrick. The French Academy. Strong facts. The national debt. Johnson's candour. Low company. Johnson and the country magistrate. Free and fat. Johnson's readiness to apologise. His generous humanity. His judicious charity. His treatment of the poor. His propensity to paltry saving. Merriment of parsons. Ossian's poems. Infidels. Johnson's "estate in Yorkshire." Ignorance. King David. <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> . Parodies on Percy's ballads. Volubility. Mrs. Macaulay. A rude speech. A lie to the eye. Funeral urns. "Too many irons in the fire." Comical answer to Goldsmith. Story-telling. "Introductions" and "conclusions." The Holy Eu-
--

charist. Johnson's recitation of poetry. Veracity. "Fiddle-de-dee." Romantic virtue. Want of cash. A "lazy dog." A scoundrel. A tradesman's daughter and her inferiors. Methodist preachers. Respect due to a D.D. Gallantry of the old English nobility. A dull fellow. "Triumph of hope over experience." Foppery. Mr. Montague's party. Climbing. Rapid reading. Indiscriminate charity. Mr. Walmesley's epitaph. Riot in Marylebone Gardens. Johnson's attention to fashion. Johnson's "good things." Schoolmasters. Johnson's Lent fast. Palmyra. "I can wait." Awkwardness in counting money. Berkeley's theory. Johnson's dislikes. A "stately shop." Difference between a well and ill-bred man. A fraudulent wife. A charade. Johnson's criticisms on his own writings. Garrick. Johnson's "frisk" with Beauclerk and Langton. Desire of distinction. Corneille and Shakespeare. Emigration of the Scotch to London. "Vacuity." "Ocean." Johnson's aversion to being worsted in argument. Dr. Goldsmith. Dignity of literature. Johnson'sfeat on the stage. A pun. Clubs. Dr. Barnard *Page 302*



THE LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON.

CHAPTER I.

Johnson's birth and parentage. His infant precocity. Taken to London to be touched for the "king's evil." Goes to school at Lichfield. Particulars of his boyish days. Removes to the school of Stourbridge, and is admitted into the best society of the place. He quits Stourbridge, and "loiters" for two years at home. Singular example of his casual reading at this period. Specimens of his early poems. He enters at Pembroke College, Oxford. Neglects lectures. Translates Pope's *Messiah* into Latin. His habits and course of study at the University. He quits Oxford. Is overwhelmed with hypochondria. Becomes religious. Loses his father. Is appointed usher of Market Bosworth school. Goes to Birmingham. Translates Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia*. Returns to Lichfield. Writes to Mr. Cave. Is an unsuccessful candidate for the mastership of Solihull school. His youthful loves, and forbidding appearance. He marries. Opens a private seminary near Lichfield. His pupils. He begins *Irene*.



O Lichfield belongs the honour of being the birthplace of SAMUEL JOHNSON. Michael Johnson, his father, was a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled and carried on the trade of a bookseller and stationer in the above city. There for fifty years he occupied a respectable rank among his fellow-citizens, and acquired considerable wealth; most of which, however, he subsequently lost by engaging in the manufacture of parchment, in which undertaking nothing prospered. He was a man of large and ro-

bust body, and strong and active mind ; a zealous churchman and royalist, attached to the house of Stuart ; but “ wrong-headed,” positive, and afflicted by melancholy. His business, however, requiring him to use much horse-exercise, contributed to preserve his health and sanity. Michael’s wife, Sarah Johnson, whose maiden name was Ford, was descended from an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. She appears to have been a person of superior understanding and much piety. They were advanced in years—he being past fifty, and she upwards of forty—when they married, and they had only two children, both sons, Samuel, their first-born, and Nathanael, who departed this life in his twenty-fifth year.

The illustrious subject of this biography was born on the 18th of September, 1709 ; and, probably on account of his appearing unlikely to live many hours, was baptised on the same day. He was put out to nurse ; but was “ in ten weeks,” to employ his own words, “ taken home a poor diseased infant, almost blind.” To his mother must be ascribed those early impressions of religion upon his mind which were subsequently the occasion of so much good to himself and others. Of his infant precocity the following anecdote has been recorded. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learned to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the Common Prayer-Book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, “ Sam, you must get this by heart.” She went up stairs, leaving him to study it ; but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. “ What’s the matter ? ” said she. “ I can say it, ” he replied, and repeated it distinctly ; though he could not have read it more than twice.

Samuel was afflicted with the scrofula, or king’s-evil, “ which,” says his friend and biographer Boswell, “ disfigured a countenance naturally well-formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other.” His mother, acting by the advice of Sir John Floyer, then a physician in Lichfield, took him to London in the Lent of 1712, to be touched by Queen Anne—the last of our English sovereigns who thus dispensed a reputed healing gift for the above disease, derived to them by St.

Edward the Confessor. This ceremony in Johnson's case, however, was ineffectual. He was only thirty months old when it took place; but his retentive memory enabled him to remember and relate in after-years that they went in a stage-coach, and returned in a wagon; and that the queen wore diamonds and a long black hood.

He first learned to read, according to Mrs. Piozzi, of his mother and her old maid Catherine, in whose lap he well remembered sitting, while she explained to him the story of St. George and the Dragon. Dame Oliver, a widow who kept a school for young children in Lichfield, was his next teacher. A story respecting him at this period, illustrative of that jealous independence of spirit and impetuosity of temper which never forsook him, may here be related. One day, when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. His schoolmistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn round and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit. His next instructor in English was one "Tom Brown," who published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE. Mr. Hawkins, undermaster of Lichfield grammar-school, introduced him to a knowledge of Latin. With him he continued two years; and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head master, who, he relates, was "wrongheadedly severe," and used to "beat the boys unmercifully," to save them, as he said, from the gallows. Johnson was sensible, however, how much he owed to this gentleman, and upon all occasions expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the rod. In a conversation with Dr. Burney, in the year 1775, he observed, "There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end, they lose at the other." "I would rather," he remarked, on another occasion, "have the rod to be the general terror of all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed

than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other." Under Mr. Hunter, Johnson made good progress, and evinced that superiority over his fellows which he maintained with so much dignity through life; "and was not assumed," says Boswell, "from vanity or ostentation, but was the natural and constant effect of those extraordinary powers of mind, of which he could not but be conscious by comparison."

Some particulars of his boyish days, related by Mr. Hector, one of his schoolfellows, may not be uninteresting. He seemed to learn by intuition; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else: and he was never corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. His favourites received very liberal assistance from him; and three of his juvenile associates used to come in the morning, as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus he was borne triumphant. Boswell instances this as a proof of the early predominance of his intellectual vigour; but perhaps it may be as justly esteemed an evidence of his corporeal prowess, which was by no means despicable. He had a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so retentive that he never forgot any thing that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector, on one occasion, recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line. In consequence of his defective sight, he never joined with the other boys in their usual amusements; and he long afterwards "pleasantly" remarked, "how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them." His only diversion was in winter, when he was fond of being drawn upon the ice by one of his companions barefooted, who pulled him along by a garter tied round his middle; no very easy operation, as

his size was remarkably large. Dr. Percy, the celebrated editor of the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, has recorded, that Johnson at this period was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry ; and he retained his liking for them through life ; so that, says his lordship, “ spending part of a summer at my parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of *Felixmarte of Hircania*, in folio, which he read quite through. Yet I have heard him attribute to these extravagant fictions that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession.” From his earliest years he loved poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end ; and he perused Shakspeare at a period so early, that the speech of the Ghost in *Hamlet* terrified him when alone. One singular example of his casual boyish studies is preserved. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio in his father’s shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples ; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book.

After residing some time at the house of his relative,¹ Cornelius Ford, where, he relates, he evinced his extreme partiality for boiled leg of mutton, Johnson, by the suggestion of his cousin, the Rev. Mr. Ford (a man of loose habits, but sound judgment), was removed to the school of Stourbridge, Worcestershire, where he did not derive much benefit, but acted, it is said, as an assistant to the master, Mr. Wentforth, in teaching the younger boys. He subsequently discriminated his progress at his two grammar-schools thus : “ At one I learned much in the school, but little from the master ; in the other I learned much from the master, but little in the school.” At Stourbridge, where his genius was so distinguished that he was admitted into the best company of the place, and received no common attention, he remained little more than a year. At the end of this time he returned home, and may be said to have loitered for two years² “ in a

¹ Boswell says, his uncle : according to Sir John Hawkins, his “cousin german.”

² A writer in the *Gent. Mag.*, Oct. 1829, asserts, that during these two years Johnson was engaged in learning his father’s business.

state very unworthy of his uncommon abilities." His father scolded him for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all; but merely "lived from day to day." During this season, notwithstanding, he was far from idle, though he might, perhaps, have studied more methodically and assiduously. He read a great deal in a desultory way; not works of mere amusement, or even voyages and travels, but, as he afterwards told Boswell, "all literature, sir; all ancient writers, all manly; though but little Greek, only some Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this irregular manner I had looked into a great many books which were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."

Two specimens of his poetical compositions, written during his school-days or shortly after, may be inserted here. The first was made almost *impromptu* in Mr. Hector's presence.

TO A YOUNG LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY.

This tributary verse receive, my fair,
 Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer.
 May this returning day for ever find
 Thy form more lovely, more adorned thy mind;
 All pains, all cares may favouring Heaven remove,
 All but the sweet solicitudes of love!
 May powerful nature join with grateful art
 To point each glance, and force it to the heart!
 O then, when conquered crowds confess thy sway,
 When e'en proud wealth and prouder wit obey,
 My fair, be mindful of the mighty trust:
 Alas, 'tis hard for beauty to be just!
 Those sovereign charms with sweetest care employ;
 Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy;
 With his own form acquaint the forward fool,
 Shewn in the faithful glass of ridicule;
 Teach mimic censure her own faults to find;
 No more let coquettes to themselves be blind.
 So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind.

THE YOUNG AUTHOR.

When first the peasant, long inclined to roam,
Forsakes his rural sports and peaceful home,
Pleased with the scene the smiling ocean yields,
He scorns the verdant meads and flowery fields ;
Then dances jocund o'er the watery way,
While the breeze whispers and the streamers play.
Unbounded prospects in his bosom roll,
And future millions lift his rising soul ;
In blissful dreams he digs the golden mine,
And raptured sees the new-found ruby shine.
Joys insincere ! Thick clouds invade the skies,
Loud roar the billows, high the waves arise ;
Sick'ning with fear, he longs to view the shore,
And vows to trust the faithless deep no more.

So the young Author, panting after fame,
And the long honours of a lasting name,
Intrusts his happiness to human kind,
More false, more cruel than the seas or wind.
“ Toil on, dull crowd,” in ecstasies he cries,
“ For wealth or title, perishable prize ;
While I those transitory blessings scorn,
Secure of praise from ages yet unborn.”
This thought once formed, all counsel comes too late,
He flies to press, and hurries on his fate ;
Swiftly he sees the imagined laurels spread,
And feels the unfading wreath surround his head.
Warned by another's fate, vain youth, be wise ;
Those dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's.

The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise ;
To some retreat the baffled writer flies,
Where no sour critics snarl, no sneers molest,
Safe from the tart lampoon and stinging jest :
There begs of Heaven a less distinguished lot,
Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

On the 31st October, 1728, Johnson (being then in his nineteenth year) was entered as a commoner at Pembroke College, Oxford. That his father, at that time reduced in circumstances, engaged to be responsible for his expenses at the University, is very improbable. A neighbouring gentle-

man, Mr. Andrew Corbett, writes one of his biographers, having a son who had been educated at the same school with Johnson, a proposal was made and accepted, that the latter should attend his son to the college before mentioned in quality of an assistant to his studies. On reference, however, to the college books, it appears that the residence of the youth in question was so irregular, and so little coincident with Johnson's, that there is no reason to suppose that Johnson was employed as his private tutor, or even as his companion. Be this as it may, Johnson never received any assistance whatever from either of the Corbetts. Some account of what passed on the night of his first appearance at Oxford must not be omitted. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. The old gentleman was very loquacious in regard to his son's abilities, and told the company "he was a good scholar and a poet, and wrote Latin verses." Johnson's figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent; till, upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, "he suddenly struck in, and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself."

Mr. Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was, according to Johnson, "a very worthy man, but a heavy man." He adds, "I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend them much. The first day after I came to college I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jorden asked me why I had not attended? I answered, I had been sliding in Christchurch meadow. And this I said with as much *nonchalance*¹ as I am now (March 20, 1776,) talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong, or irreverent to my tutor." "Johnson," says Hawkins, "would oftener risk the payment of a small fine than attend his tutor's lectures; nor was he studious to conceal the reason of his absence. Upon occasion of one such imposition, he said to Jorden, 'Sir, you have scored me twopence for non-attendance at a lecture not worth a penny.'" It ought

¹ In Johnson's account of this little event to Mr. Warton (in 1754), he says that he waited on his tutor, not with "nonchalance," but with "a beating heart."

to be remembered, remarks Boswell upon the former of the above extracts, that Dr. Johnson was apt, in his literary as well as moral exercises, to overcharge his defects. He attended his tutor's lectures, and also the lectures in the College Hall, very regularly.

The anniversary of the gunpowder plot was at that time "religiously observed" at Pembroke, and exercises on the subject of the day were required. Johnson neglected to compose any; but by way of apology, wrote a short copy of verses to the effect that the Muse had come to him in his sleep and whispered, that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics; he should confine himself to humbler themes. This poem was so well approved by Mr. Jordan, that Johnson was asked by that gentleman to translate Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed this task with uncommon rapidity and ability; and it obtained for him not only the applause of his College and University, but of Pope himself; who is said to have remarked, "The writer of this poem will leave it a question with posterity whether his or mine be the original."

Johnson's line of reading at Oxford, and during the vacations, cannot be traced. He told Boswell, that "what he read *solidly* at the University was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little epigram; that the study of which he was most fond was metaphysics, but he had not read much even in that way." Hawkins observes, that he had little relish for mathematics. The divine science of lines and quindecagons had no charms for him. It is probable that Johnson did himself injustice in his account of what he had studied. Trying him by the criterion upon which he formed his judgment of others, we may be absolutely certain, both from his writings and conversation, that his reading was very extensive. He appears, at various times, to have attempted, or at least planned, a methodical course of study. Like the lamented Southey, he had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without perusing it throughout.¹ He had, from

¹ "Mr. Johnson," remarks Mrs. Piozzi, "had never, by his own account, been a close student, and used to advise young people never to be without a book in their pocket, to be read at by-times, when they had nothing else to do. 'It has been by that means,' said he to a boy at our house one

his constitutional irritability, at all times an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. An apprehension, arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at college twice over; but he never took that trouble with any other composition, and his most excellent works were "struck off in a heat with rapid exertion." "Johnson's manner of composing," says Bishop Percy, "has not been rightly understood. He was so extremely shortsighted, from the defect in his eyes, that writing was inconvenient to him; for whenever he wrote, he was obliged to hold the paper close to his face. He therefore never composed what we call a foul draft on paper of any thing he published; but used to revolve the subject in his mind, and turn and form every period, till he had brought the whole to the highest correctness and the most perfect arrangement. Then his uncommonly retentive memory enabled him to deliver a whole essay, properly finished, whenever it was called for. I have often heard him humming and forming periods in low whispers to himself, when shallow observers thought he was muttering prayers, &c. But Johnson is well known to have represented his own practice in the following passage in his 'Life of Pope': 'Of composition there are different methods. Some employ at once memory and invention; and with little intermediate use of the pen, form and polish large masses by continued meditation, and write their productions only when, in their own opinion, they have completed them.'"

No one could love literature more than Johnson. One day, while he was sitting alone in his college chamber (which was that upon the second floor over the gateway), the Master of Pembroke heard him uttering this soliloquy: "Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua. And I'll mind my business. For an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads." He was a general favourite with his companions, and considered by them jovial and frolicsome. The pleasure he took in vexing the tutors and fellows has been often mentioned. He might be generally seen lounging at the college-gate

day, 'that all my knowledge has been gained, except what I have picked up by running about the world with my wits ready to observe, and my tongue ready to talk.'"

with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with his wit and keeping from their studies, if not “spiriting them up” to rebellion against the college discipline. The secret of this seeming levity and insubordination will be stated best in Johnson’s own words: “I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority.”

Johnson did not form any close intimacies with his fellow collegians, though he contracted a love for Pembroke which he retained to the last. He took pleasure in boasting of the many eminent men who had been educated there; and, being himself a poet, was “peculiarly happy” in mentioning how many Pembroke men were similarly gifted; adding with a smile of sportive triumph, “Sir, we were a nest of singing-birds.” That he was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his college, appears from the following anecdote (which, it must be owned, has been called in question by Mr. Croker) related by Boswell. Taylor, one of his old school-fellows, with whom he was very intimate, was about to be entered at Pembroke. To this measure, Johnson, although it would have afforded him great comfort, would not consent, on account of Mr. Jorden’s inefficiency. Ascertaining that Mr. Bateman of Christchurch was the tutor of the highest reputation in the University, he persuaded his friend to place himself under his care. “Mr. Bateman’s lectures,” adds Boswell, “were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them second-hand from Taylor; till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christchurch-men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money; and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation.”

Uncontrollable circumstances deprived Johnson of a complete university education. The friend in whom he had confided for support had deceived him. His debts in college were increasing, and the money which he received from home, always scanty, could at length be supplied no longer, in consequence of his father having become insolvent. He

personally left college without a degree, December 12, 1729 though his *name* remained on the books till October 8, 1731. How he was occupied during the above interval—including the 21st and 22d years of his age—has not been ascertained. That it was not pleasantly or profitably spent may be inferred from the silence of Johnson and all his friends respecting it.

That “morbid melancholy” which he seems to have inherited from his father, and which is so common an attendant on scrofulous habits, gathered such strength in his twentieth year as grievously to afflict him. While at Lichfield, in the college vacation of 1729,¹ he was overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this malady he never afterwards perfectly recovered; and all his toils and enjoyments were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence. Upon the first attack of this disorder, he strove to overcome it by “forcible exertion.” He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but without success. It was at this period, or a little earlier, that Johnson became a sincerely pious man. Whatever of assiduity was employed by his mother in the instruction of his infant mind concerning the duties and doctrines of Christianity, was not, it seems, very judiciously guided; and consequently gave him rather a distaste for religion, and indifference about it, which continued from his ninth till his fourteenth year. From that age till the date of his going to Oxford, he *talked* laxly against it. When at the University, he took up the Nonjuror Law’s *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, and was so affected and convinced by its contents, that from this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts and affections.

Sad, indeed, were Johnson’s prospects on his return to Lichfield from the University. His parents could not support him, and, for some time, no means appeared by which he might gain a livelihood. His path, however, was not

¹ Such is Boswell’s statement. This is probably a mistake for 1730. Johnson appears to have remained in college during the vacation of 1729; and (as we observed above) we have no trace of him in the year 1730, during which he was possibly labouring under this malady, and, on that account, absent from college.

bereft of *every* gleam of sunshine. His merit had, from his earliest years, secured him a kind reception from the best families of his native city, and among them he passed much time in his youthful days. In most of them (particularly at Mr. Gilbert Walmesley's¹) he enjoyed the society of ladies; so that the notion that he never was in good company till late in life, and consequently had been confirmed in "coarse and ferocious" manners by long habits, is wholly unfounded. In the autumn of 1731, he made an unsuccessful effort to procure the appointment of usher in the grammar-school of Stourbridge, where, it will be remembered, he himself had been partly educated. In the December of this year Johnson lost his father, who left to his son the paltry pittance of 20*l.* At length, in the summer following, he obtained a situation in the school of Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, to which he went on foot on the 16th of July. The employment of training the youthful mind was, however, very irksome to him. He complained to his old friend Hector, who was now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham, that his life was unvaried as the note of a cuckoo; and that "he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules." His misery was increased by a quarrel between him and Sir Wolston Dixie, the patron of the school, in whose house he appears to have officiated as "a kind of domestic chaplain." After a brief sojourn at Bosworth, he resigned a situation which, says Boswell, all his life afterwards he remembered with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror.

Shortly after leaving the purgatory above mentioned, Johnson accepted an invitation from Mr. Hector, and became his guest for six months, at the house of Mr. Warren, with whom Hector lodged and boarded. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, of whose literary knowledge and acumen he freely availed himself. Unwilling to lose the society of his old school-fellow, the latter, on quitting his friend's lodgings, hired others in another part of the town, at the house of a person named Jervis, probably a relative of Mrs. Porter, the lady whom he

¹ Mr. Walmesley was registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court of Lichfield, and a firm friend to Johnson. His wife was a daughter of Sir Thomas Aston, Bart.

afterwards married. How he gained his subsistence at this period is involved in obscurity. Warren most likely gave him some pecuniary aid; and it is related that, at the instigation of that person and Mr. Hector, he undertook a translation and abridgment of a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit. Part of the work being soon completed, one Osborn was employed to print it, and Johnson engaged to supply him with copy as it was required: but his constitutional indolence soon prevailed, and the book was at a stand. Upon this, Hector represented to his slothful friend, that the poor printer and his family were suffering from the delay. This appeal to Johnson's kindness of heart was successful. He lay in bed with the book, a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. The latter carried the ms. to the press, and corrected the proof-sheets, or most of them. In this way the work was finished. It was published in 1735, without the translator's name; and the reward of Johnson's labour was only five guineas. There is, remarks Boswell, in the translation itself no vestige of Johnson's own style, but in the preface it begins to appear; and we have there an early example "of that brilliant and energetic expression, which, upon innumerable occasions in his subsequent life, justly impressed the world with the highest admiration."

Johnson returned to Lichfield early in 1734; and in the August of that year published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin poems of Politian. Enough subscribers, however, were not found to insure a sufficient sale; so the work never appeared. He revisited Birmingham soon afterwards. A letter of his (dated November 25, 1734) is preserved, addressed to Mr. Cave, the original editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and suggesting the admission into that miscellany of "not only poems, inscriptions, &c. never printed before, but likewise short literary dissertations in Latin and English, critical remarks on authors ancient and modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, or loose pieces worth preserving." Whether any thing was done in consequence of this epistle is unknown.

In the following year Mr. Walmesley endeavoured to procure for Johnson the mastership of the grammar-school of Solihull, Warwickshire. That part of the answer to his application which relates the cause of its failure is too curious

to be omitted. “He has,” says the writer, in allusion to Johnson, “the character of being a very haughty, ill-natured gent, and that he has such a way of distorting his face (which though he can’t help), the gents think it might affect some young lads: for these two reasons he is not approved on; the late master Mr. Crompton’s huffing the feoffees being still in their memory.”

From his boyhood, Johnson was a votary of the fair sex. When at Stourbridge school, he fixed his affections on Olivia Lloyd, a young quakeress, and addressed her in a copy of verses; but this juvenile attachment was very transient, and his youth was never stained by immorality. In 1735, he became the “fervent admirer” of Mrs. Porter, a widow. Her daughter relates, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding: he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair (not a wig, as was the fashion), which was straight and stiff, and separated behind; and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation, that she overlooked all these external disadvantages; and said to her daughter, “This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life.” Much misrepresentation, says Dr. Percy, has prevailed in reference to Johnson’s appearance. His countenance, “when in a good humour, was not disagreeable; his face clear, his complexion good, and his features not ill-formed—many ladies have thought they might not be unattractive when he was young.”

There was a great disparity of years between Mrs. Porter and Johnson,¹ and her person and demeanour were by no means fascinating. Miss Seward, in her fabulous account of Johnson’s courtship, affirms that “she had a very red face and very indifferent features, and her manners had an unbecoming excess of girlish levity and disgusting affectation;” a description which partly agrees with that of the celebrated David Garrick, who described her to Boswell as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with

¹ He was twenty-six, and she in her forty-eighth year.

swelled cheeks of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials ; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and general behaviour. That she was handsome in the eyes of her lover, appears from the epitaph which he caused to be inscribed on her tombstone, and which will be found in a subsequent page of this biography. She must have been a person of good understanding to have won the heart of Johnson, who, upon her acceptance of his offer of marriage, went to Lichfield and obtained his mother's unwilling consent to the wedding. This was celebrated at Derby, July 9, 1736 ; and the account of Johnson's journey thither with his Dulcinea is amusing. We give it in his own words : " Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me ; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice ; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it : and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

It is not impossible that the obvious advantage of having a woman of experience to superintend a boarding-school, may have had some weight with Johnson in the choice of his partner ; as, directly after his marriage, he opened a private academy at Edial Hall, a large house in the neighbourhood of Lichfield. Here he did not meet with the success he anticipated. Only three pupils were sent to him, namely, David Garrick and his brother George, and a youth named Offeley, of Whichenoure Park, Staffordshire, who died early. Johnson liked his position as the master of a school as little as that of usher ; and he relinquished his academy at the expiration of about a year and a half. He was regarded with small reverence by his scholars, to whom his oddities of manner and uncouth gesticulations were a fund of amusement ; and in particular, the " young rogues " used to " listen at the door of his apartment, and peep through the keyhole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fond-

ness for Mrs. Johnson; whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsey*," a contraction for Elizabeth, her Christian name, and sufficiently ludicrous when applied to a female such as has been described.

During Johnson's reign as a pedagogue, he was insensibly storing and improving his mind, and also employed on his tragedy of *Irene*. When he had finished some part of it, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmesley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress, and asked him, "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?" Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmesley was registrar, replied, "Sir, I can put her into the spiritual court."



CHAPTER II.

Johnson accompanies David Garrick to London, and lodges in Exeter Street. Lives on fourpence-halfpenny per day. Retires to Greenwich and writes *Irene*. Proposes a translation of the *History of the Council of Trent*. Returns to Lichfield, and completes his tragedy. Removes with his wife to London. Contributes Debates in Parliament to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Publishes *London*, a poem. Does not succeed in obtaining the degree of Master of Arts. His extreme indigence. He publishes *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage*, and *Marmor Norfolciense*. Knocks down the bookseller Osborne. Evinces his affection for his mother. Publishes the *Life of Richard Savage*. Publishes *Miscellaneous Observations on Macbeth*, and *Proposals for a new edition of Shakspeare*. Puts forth the Prospectus of his *Dictionary*. His method of compiling his Dictionary. He visits Tunbridge Wells. Founds a club in Ivy Lane. His conversation. Writes *Life of Roscommon*, Preface to Dodsley's *Preceptor*, and *Vision of Theodore the Hermit*. Publishes the *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

WE must now accompany Johnson to London, whither he repaired to try his fortune in "that great field of genius and exertion." His pupil Garrick accompanied him, with a view to complete his education, and prepare for the bar. Both of them used to "talk pleasantly" of this expedition. "Garrick," observes Boswell, "evidently meaning to embellish a little, said one day in my hearing, 'We rode and tied.' And the Bishop of Killaloe (Dr. Barnard) informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself to them thus: 'That was the year when I came to London with twopence-halfpenny in my pocket.' Garrick, overhearing them, exclaimed, 'Eh! what do you mean to say? with twopence-halfpenny in your pocket?' Johnson. 'Why, yes; when I came with twopence-halfpenny in *my* pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in *thine*.'"

This may have been said facetiously, but could not have been true. Boswell afterwards acknowledges that Johnson had a little money at his arrival; and it cannot be supposed that Garrick, a young gentleman, coming to town, not as an adventurer, but to prosecute his studies, could have been in such indigent circumstances. They were recommended to the Rev. John Colson, master of the free school at Rochester, and subsequently Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, by a letter from Mr. Walmesley, in which he says, that the object of Johnson's journey was "to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French;" adding, "he is a very good scholar and poet; and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy-writer."

Little is known of Johnson's employments in the metropolis on his first arrival. Mr. Wilcox, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and, with a significant look, said, "You had better buy a porter's knot." Wilcox proved, however, one of his best friends. It does not appear that he obtained any aid or encouragement from Mr. Colson. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a staymaker, in Exeter Street, adjoining Catharine Street in the Strand; and he subsisted there for a considerable time upon fourpence-halfpenny per day. When his circumstances a little improved, he increased his expenditure proportionally. "I dined," he relates, "very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pineapple in New Street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day, but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing." At this season he abstained entirely from fermented liquors; a practice which may probably be attributed to poverty, but in his after-life he was restrained from that indulgence by moral, or rather medical, considerations. "He probably found by experience," says Croker, "that wine, though it dissipated for a moment, yet eventually aggravated the hereditary disease under which he suffered; and, per-

haps, it may have been owing to a long course of abstinence, that his mental health seems to have been better in the latter than in the earlier portion of his life."

Wishing to finish his *Irene*, of which only three acts were completed, he took lodgings at Greenwich; where he made some further progress in that composition. While in this retirement he addressed a letter, dated June 12, 1737, to Mr. Cave, in which he proposed to render into English from Italian, Father Paul Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent*, and offered to send a specimen of his translation. Soon afterwards he visited Lichfield, where he had left Mrs. Johnson; and at last completed his tragedy, which was slowly and laboriously elaborated. The whole of it is considered rich in thought, imagery, and happy expressions.

Johnson's residence at his native city, on this occasion, was only for three months; at the end of which he returned with his wife to London, and lodged first in Woodstock Street, near Hanover Square, and afterwards in Castle Street, near Cavendish Square. His first contribution to the Gentleman's Magazine was inserted in the number of that periodical for March 1738. It was a copy of highly complimentary Latin verses addressed to Cave, under his *sobriquet* of Urban. He now became a regular coadjutor in the magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable support. Part of his labour consisted in the correction and improvement of the productions of other contributors. "What we certainly know," writes Boswell, "to have been done by him in this way was, the debates in both Houses of Parliament, under the name of 'The Senate of Lilliput,' sometimes with feigned denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be deciphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices." This portion of the miscellany was for several years executed by Mr. William Guthrie, a Scottish gentleman with a "small patrimony," whose Jacobite principles prevented his acceptance of any office in the state. He was the first English historian who went for information to the parliamentary journals; and "such was the power of his political pen, that, at an early period, government thought it worth their while to keep it quiet by a pension," which he

received till his decease. The parliamentary debates which were brought home and “digested” by this gentleman, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and after a while, when Guthrie had greater employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by Johnson, it was determined “that he should do the whole himself” from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses. Sometimes, however, he had nothing more told him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the discussion, and he was obliged to fabricate the rest. The period in which he was the sole composer of these debates began November 19, 1740, and ended February 23, 1742-3. As soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he resolved that he would write no more of them; and such was his tenderness of conscience, that shortly before his death, he expressed his regret for having been the inventor of fictions which had passed for realities. He wrote the debates with more velocity than any of his other productions; often three columns of the magazine within one hour. He once wrote ten pages in one day. The secret of Johnson’s authorship of these discussions transpired some years after their publication, and was avowed by himself on the following occasion: Mr. Wedderburne (afterwards Lord Loughborough, and Earl of Rosslyn), Dr. Johnson, Dr. Francis (the translator of Horace), and others, were dining with Mr. Foote.¹ An important debate towards the end of Sir Robert Walpole’s administration being mentioned, Dr. Francis observed, “that Mr. Pitt’s speech on the occasion was the best he had ever read.” He added, “that he had employed eight years of his life in the study of Demosthenes, and finished a translation of that celebrated orator, with all the decorations

¹ Samuel Foote was born in 1721 at Truro, Cornwall; educated at Worcester College, Oxford; and intended for the bar. After a course of dissipation, to which his small fortune fell a sacrifice, he turned his attention to the stage, and appeared in *Othello*; but having little success, he struck out an untrdden path for himself, in the double character of a dramatist and performer. In 1747 he opened the Haymarket Theatre with some very humorous imitations of well-known individuals; and thus, having discovered where his strength lay, he wrote several two-act farces, and continued to perform at one of the winter theatres every season, usually bringing out some pieces of his own, and regularly returning to his summer quarters. He died in 1797. Of twenty-six dramatic pieces, the productions of his pen, the *Mayor of Garrett* is the only one which at present keeps possession of the stage.

of style and language within the reach of his capacity ; but he had met with nothing equal to the speech above mentioned." Many of the company remembered the debate ; and some passages were cited, with the approbation and applause of all present. During the ardour of conversation, Johnson remained silent. As soon as the warmth of praise had subsided, he opened with these words : " That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street. The company were struck with astonishment. After staring at each other in silent amazement, Dr. Francis asked how that speech could have been written by him ? " Sir," said Johnson, " I wrote it in Exeter Street. I never had been in the gallery of the House of Commons but once. Cave had interest with the doorkeepers. He, and the persons employed under him, gained admittance. They brought away the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the sides they took, and the order in which they rose ; together with the notes of the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form which they now have in the parliamentary debates." To this discovery Dr. Francis made answer, " Then, sir, you have exceeded Demosthenes himself ; for to say that you have exceeded Francis's Demosthenes would be saying nothing." The rest of the company bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson ; one, in particular, praised his impartiality ; observing, that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. " That is not quite true," said Johnson : " I saved appearances tolerably well ; but I took care that the *Whig dogs* should not have the best of it."¹

¹ "Cave," says Hawkins, " who had no idea of the powers of eloquence over the human mind, became sensible of its effects in the profits it brought him : he had long thought that the success of his Magazine proceeded from those parts of it that were conducted by himself . . . and was scarcely able to see the causes that at this time increased the sale of his pamphlet from ten to fifteen thousand copies a month. But if he saw not, he felt them, and manifested his good fortune by buying an old coach and a pair of older horses ; and, that he might avoid the suspicion of pride in setting up an equipage, he displayed to the world the source of his affluence by a representation of St. John's Gate, instead of his arms, on the door-panel. This, he told me himself, was the reason for distinguishing his carriage from others, by what some might think a whimsical device, and also for causing it to be engraven on all his plate."

Thus was Johnson employed, during some of the best years of his life, as a mere literary labourer, solely to obtain the means of subsistence; occasionally indulging himself, however, in *jeux d'esprit*, to which we shall advert as we proceed. The work in which his great powers were first displayed to the public was entitled *London, a Poem, in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal*; and burst forth in the May of 1783, "with a splendour, the rays of which will ever encircle his name." Where, or in what manner, says Boswell, this poem was composed, I am sorry that I neglected to ascertain with precision from Johnson's own authority. Its author offered it to Cave as the production of a friend, in the preceding March, in a letter from which the following paragraphs are extracted :

"I do not doubt but you will look over this poem with another eye, and reward it in a different manner, from a mercenary bookseller, who counts the lines he is to purchase, and considers nothing but the bulk. I cannot help taking notice that, besides what the author may hope for on account of his abilities, he has likewise another claim to your regard, as he lies at present under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune. I beg, therefore, that you will favour me with a letter to-morrow, that I may know what you can afford to allow him, that he may either part with it to you, or find out (which I do not expect) some other way more to his satisfaction. . . . By exerting on this occasion your usual generosity, you will not only encourage learning and relieve distress, but (though it be in comparison of the other motives of very small account) oblige, in a very sensible manner, sir, your very humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

In a letter to Cave, dated a few days posterior to the last, Johnson remarks: "As to the printing, if it can be immediately set about, I will be so much the author's friend as not to content myself with mere solicitations in his favour. I propose, if my calculation be near the truth, to engage for the reimbursement of all that you shall lose by an impression of five hundred; provided, as you very generously propose, that the profit, if any, be set aside for the author's use, ex-

cept the present you made, which, if he be a gainer, it is fit he should repay. I beg that you will let one of your servants write an exact account of the expense of such an impression, and send it with the poem, that I may know what I engage for."

In another epistle to the same party, Johnson says :

"I was to-day with Mr. Dodsley,¹ who declares very warmly in favour of the paper you sent him, which he desires to have a share in, it being, as he says, *a creditable thing to be concerned in*. I knew not what answer to make till I had consulted you, nor what to demand on the author's part; but am very willing that, if you please, he should have a part in it, as he will undoubtedly be more diligent to disperse and promote it. If you can send me word to-morrow what I shall say to him, I will settle matters, and bring the poem with me for the press, which, as the town empties, we cannot be too quick with."

It is curious to observe the modesty with which the author of this able poem brought it forward into public notice, while he is so cautious as not to avow it to be his own production. It is said to have been offered to several booksellers, none of whom would undertake its publication. However that may be, Dodsley had taste to discover its merit. At a future conference, he purchased the whole property of it of Johnson for ten guineas. "I might perhaps have accepted of less," was its writer's subsequent remark to Boswell, "but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem, and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead." The person here alluded to belonged to that jovial association, called the Beef-Steak Club, held in Covent Garden Theatre, and consisting of an heterogeneous mixture of peers, poets, and players. It was perhaps on this account that Johnson was prejudiced against him.

¹ Robert Dodsley was born in 1703. He had been servant to Miss Lowther; and in 1733 published, by subscription, a volume of poems, entitled the *Muse in Livery*. He afterwards wrote the *Toyshop*, and other pieces. In 1758 he projected, in concert with Mr. Burke, the *Annual Register*; and in 1759 he was succeeded in his business as a bookseller by his brother James. He departed this life in 1764.

Singularly enough, ‘London’ came out on the same morning as Pope’s celebrated satire entitled ‘1738.’ Every one was delighted with it; and there being no name on its titlepage, the first buzz of the literary circles was, “Here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope:” and it reached a second edition in the course of a week. One of its warmest supporters at its first appearance was General Oglethorpe, a man of some distinction, and “strong benevolence of soul.” Pope, on this occasion, behaved in a candid and liberal manner. He requested Mr. Jonathan Richardson, an elder brother of the celebrated novelist, to endeavour to find out the author. Richardson having informed him that he had discovered only that he was an obscure individual named Johnson, Pope replied, “He will soon be *déterré*.”

Great as was the popularity of ‘London,’ Boswell allows “that the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught had no just cause;” and we may infer that, even in his partial judgment, the poem was dictated rather by youthful feeling, inflamed by the political frenzy of the times, than by any knowledge of the world, or any mature acquaintance with life. Nor is it the least remarkable of the inconsistencies between Johnson’s early precepts and subsequent practice, that he who was, in all his latter age, the most constant and enthusiastic admirer of London, should have begun life with this vigorous and bitter invective against it. He was now writing for bread, however; and cared little what his poem was, if only it sold.

Notwithstanding the sudden fame which this production obtained for Johnson, he felt so acutely the truth of his own forcible lines,

“ This mournful truth is everywhere confessed,
Slow rises worth, by poverty depressed;”

and the hardship of being “an author by profession,” dependent for his daily bread upon whatever the booksellers chose or could afford to give him for the occasional productions of his pen, that he was willing to resume the toils of the ferula and the flogging block, so as to secure a sure though moderate income for his life. The mastership of a school at Appleby, Leicestershire, was offered him, on the condition of his obtaining the degree of Master of Arts.

This was thought too great a favour to be asked of the University of Oxford. Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his ‘London,’ recommended him to Earl Gower, who wrote to a friend of Swift, and solicited him to request the Dean to persuade the University of Dublin to send Johnson the coveted diploma. This application had not the desired result; and Johnson, about this time, made one other effort to escape the hardships of writing for bread. He asked Dr. Adams (afterwards Master of Pembroke College, Oxford) to ascertain whether a person might be admitted to practise as an advocate in the Commons without being a doctor in civil law. Adams was much pleased with this design, but here also the want of a degree was an insuperable obstacle.

Obliged, consequently, to persevere in his literary course, Johnson induced Cave to accept his proposal (before mentioned) for a translation of Father Paul’s History of the Council of Trent; and some of the sheets were printed off, when, oddly enough, another Samuel Johnson, librarian of St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields, and curate of that parish, engaged in the same undertaking, under episcopal and clerical auspices. The rival translators fought some slight skirmishes in the papers of the day; and in the end neither proceeded with the work. “I have in my possession,” says Boswell, “by the favour of Mr. John Nichols, a paper in Johnson’s handwriting, entitled ‘Account between Mr. Edward Cave and Samuel Johnson in relation to a version of Father Paul, &c., begun August the 2d, 1738;’ by which it appears, that from that day to the 21st of April, 1739, Johnson received for this work 49*l.* 7*s.*, in sums of one, two, three, and sometimes four guineas at a time, most frequently two. And it is curious to observe the minute and scrupulous accuracy with which Johnson had pasted upon it a slip of paper, which he has entitled ‘Small account;’ and which contains one article: ‘Sept. 9th, Mr. Cave laid down 2*s.* 6*d.*’”

Johnson’s need of money at this time is strikingly illustrated by the fact, that in a letter to Cave (Sept. 1738), he subscribes himself, “Yours *impransus* [dinnerless].”

To the Gentleman’s Magazine of this year he contributed a life of Father Paul; and he wrote the preface to the volume. The ability and nice adaptation with which he could draw up an introductory address was one of his peculiar ex-

cellences. During 1739, besides the aid which he gave to the parliamentary debates, he enriched the same miscellany with the ‘Life of Boerhaave,’ in which it is to be observed, that he discovers that love of chemistry which never forsook him; ‘An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor;’ and several minor pieces. His separate publications were, *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage from the malicious and scandalous aspersions of Mr. Brooke, author of Gustavus Vasa*, being an ironical attack upon them for their suppression of that tragedy; and *Marmor Norfolciense, or an Essay on an Ancient Prophetical Inscription, in monkish rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne, in Norfolk, by Probus Britannicus*. “In this performance,” remarks Boswell, “he, in a feigned inscription, supposed to have been found in Norfolk, the county of Sir Robert Walpole, then the obnoxious prime minister of this country, inveighs against the Brunswick succession, and the measures of government consequent upon it. To this supposed prophecy he added a commentary, making each expression apply to the times, with warm anti-Hanoverian zeal.”

This anonymous pamphlet did not excite so much attention as was expected, and had not a very extensive circulation. Both these satirical effusions were, in some degree, prompted by that which Johnson frequently declared to be the only genuine motive to writing, namely, pecuniary profit. He not only avowed this principle, but it seems to have been wrought by him into a habit. He was never greedy of money, but without it could not be stimulated to write. Yet was he not, says his friend Hawkins, so indifferent to the subjects that he was requested to write on, as at any time to abandon either his religious or political opinions. To his honour be it said, that his principles co-operated with his necessities, and that prostitution of his talents could not, in justice, be imputed to him.

In 1740, and the following year, Johnson wrote for the Gentleman’s Magazine the preface, some biographies, and an ‘Essay on Epitaphs,’ besides the parliamentary debates (of which in 1741 and the next two succeeding years he was, as we have before stated, the sole author), and several translations. Among his contributions to the above periodical in 1742 was, ‘Proposals for printing *Bibliotheca Har-*

leiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.' His account of that celebrated collection was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the catalogue, in which the Latin accounts of books were his composition. He was employed on this work by Thomas Osborne, a bookseller, who figures in the *Dunciad*; and was stigmatised by Johnson as "entirely destitute of shame, without sense of any disgrace but that of poverty." It having been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, Boswell once took an opportunity of asking his illustrious friend as to the accuracy of the report. "Sir," was the reply, "he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop; it was in my own chamber." Osborne, it appears, alarmed the family with his cries; but Johnson, "clapping his foot upon his breast, would not let him stir till he had exposed him in that situation; and then left him, with this triumphant expression: 'Lie there, thou son of dulness, ignorance, and obscurity.'" From a letter of Johnson's to Cave (Aug. 1743), it appears that the former was now occupied in preparing an historical account of the British Parliament. His want of money, and the difficulty he had to procure it even when due, appears from the following extract from this epistle:—

" You told me on Saturday that I had received money on this work, and found set down 13*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, reckoning the half guinea of last Saturday. As you hinted to me that you had many calls for money, I would not press you too hard; and therefore shall desire only, as I send it in, two guineas for a sheet of copy; the rest you may pay me when it may be more convenient; and even by this sheet-payment I shall for some time be very expensive. . . . If you could spare me another guinea for the History, I should take it very kindly to-night; but if you do not, I shall not think it an injury."

Johnson's papers in Cave's miscellany for 1743 were comparatively few, and of little importance. One of his old schoolfellows, Dr. James, published this year a *Medicinal Dictionary*. He composed the proposals for the book, the dedication of it to Dr. Mead, and furnished some of the

articles. Notwithstanding his own poverty, he exhibited at this time his affectionate liberality for his mother by taking upon himself a debt of hers of twelve pounds, which, small in itself, was yet considerable to him. "It does not appear," relates Boswell, "that he wrote any thing in 1744 for the Gentleman's Magazine but the preface;" upon which statement Croker observes: "In this and the two next years Mr. Boswell has not assigned to Johnson any contributions to the Gentleman's Magazine; yet there seems little doubt that from his connexion with that work he derived, for some years, the chief and almost the only means of subsistence for himself and his wife: perhaps he may have acted as general editor, with an annual allowance; and he no doubt employed himself on more literary works than have been acknowledged. In this point the public loss is, perhaps, not great. What he was unwilling to allow, we need not be very solicitous to discover. Indeed, his personal history is about this period a blank, hidden, it is to be feared, in the obscurity of indigence." The February of the above year, however, was signalled by the publication of Johnson's *Life of Richard Savage*—an individual whose connexion with his biographer illustrates the proverb that "Poverty makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows." Savage's misfortunes and misconduct, which had reduced him to "the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread," occasioned his visits to Cave, and thus naturally brought Johnson and him together. Their acquaintance ripened into intimacy: a circumstance at which some surprise has been expressed, seeing that the character of Savage was disgraced by baseness and immorality. According to Boswell, these companions in misfortune were sometimes in such extreme penury that they could not pay for a lodging, and wandered together whole nights in the streets.¹ The above-assigned cause of these nocturnal peregrinations may be questioned, so far at least as Johnson is concerned. It will be remembered that he

¹ Johnson told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation, but, in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and "resolved they would stand by their country." Savage died in 1743.

was married, and must always have had a home for his wife, unless (which is very questionable) a temporary separation, produced by pecuniary distress, took place between them about this time. Malone suggests that "Johnson, at different periods, had lodgings in the vicinity of London; and his finances certainly would not admit of a double establishment. When, therefore, he spent a convivial day in London, and found it too late to return to any country residence he may occasionally have had, having no lodging in town, he was obliged to pass the night in the manner described above." The influence of Savage must have been the reverse of salutary; and, though Johnson's good principles remained unshaken, it is to be feared that he was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind. The 'Life' (of which Cave purchased the copyright for fifteen guineas) is perhaps one of the most interesting narratives in the English language,¹ albeit there is ground for believing that its author was grossly imposed upon by the unworthy subject of the biography. It gives, like Raffaelle's Lazarus, or Murillo's Beggar (to cite a distinguished writer) pleasure as a work of art, while the original could only excite disgust. Johnson has spread over his friend's character the varnish, or rather the veil, of stately diction and extenuatory phrases, but cannot prevent the observant reader from seeing that Savage was an ungrateful and insolent profligate. The rapidity with which this work was composed is astonishing. Johnson has been heard to say (Aug. 13, 1773), "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the Life of Savage at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."

In this memoir he speaks with peculiar acrimony against actors; and it is another of those remarkable inconsistencies in Johnson's character, before alluded to, that, as the first publication of this determined admirer of the metropolis was a satire upon London, so the first production of this despiser of the stage was a play. Boswell is constrained to allow, though with reluctance, that Dr. Johnson *envied* Garrick; and to this source may perhaps be attributed his indignation against players, of whom he always spoke contemptuously.

¹ This "Life" was written in six-and-thirty hours!

His schoolfellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, relates a "pleasant" anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his quondam pupil, Garrick. When that great actor had performed some little time at Goodman's Fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him; and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and "old Giffard," the manager of the theatre. Johnson, after censuring with emphasis some mistakes which Garrick had made in the course of his performance, said, "The players, sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis." Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it; upon which Johnson rejoined, "Well, now, I'll give you something to speak with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth commandment—'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'" Both tried at it, and both mistook the emphasis. Johnson, adds Taylor, put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

Johnson's extreme indigence when he gave to the world the *Life of Savage* is proved by the following authentic story:—Soon after its appearance, Mr. Harte, author of the *Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, dined with Cave; and occasionally praised Johnson's production. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, "You made a man very happy t'other day." "How could that be?" asked Harte; "nobody was there but ourselves." Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen; which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily,¹ that he did not choose to ap-

¹ Johnson's best dress was, in his early times, so very mean, that one afternoon, as he was following some persons upstairs, on a visit to "a lady of fashion," the servant, not knowing him, suddenly seized him by the shoulder, and exclaimed, "You fellow! what is your business here? I suppose you intended to rob the house!" striving at the same time to drag him back; but a gentleman who was a few steps behind prevented her from doing or saying more; and Johnson growled all the way upstairs, and was much chagrined and discomposed. Before he had his pension in 1762, he literally dressed like a beggar. Subsequently he was a liberal customer to his tailor; and "I can remember," says Miss Hawkins, "that his linen was often a strong contrast to the colour of his hands." "A brown coat with metal buttons," writes Cumberland, "black waistcoat, and worsted stockings, with a flowing bob-wig, was the style of his wardrobe; but they were in perfect trim; and with the ladies, whom he generally met, he had nothing of the slovenly philosopher about him."

pear; but, on hearing the conversation, he was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book.

In 1745 Johnson published a pamphlet, entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth; with remarks on Sir T. H.'s [Sir Thomas Hanmer's] Edition of Shakspeare*; to which he appended proposals for a new edition of the works of that great dramatist. It has been conjectured that this project occupied him closely for a while; but the little encouragement which was given by the public to his anonymous propositions for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken, damped his ardour. The pamphlet, however, was highly applauded, and obtained the approval of Warburton himself; of which a very grateful remembrance was ever entertained by Johnson, who said, "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me."

His literary labours during the next year seem to have been almost totally suspended. An epistolary communication of Walmesley to Garrick, dated Nov. 3d, 1746, contains this passage: "When you see Mr. Johnson, pray give my compliments, and tell him I esteem him as a great genius, *quite lost both to himself and the world.*"

Garrick having, in 1747, become joint patentee and manager of Drury Lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a prologue, which Boswell characterises as unrivalled, and Byron as one of the only "two decent prologues in our tongue." This year was the epoch when Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* was announced by the publication of its plan or prospectus. "How long this immense undertaking," remarks one of his biographers, "had been the object of his contemplation I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language, by which he was enabled to realise a design of such extent and accumulated difficulty. He told me that 'it was not the effect of particular study, but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly.' I have been informed by Mr. James Dodsley, that several years before that period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him that a dictionary of the English language would be a work that would be well received by the public; that John-

son seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but, after a pause, said, in his abrupt decisive manner, ‘ I believe I shall not undertake it.’ That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject before he published his ‘ Plan,’ is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities were selected by Pope; which proves that he had been furnished, probably by Mr. Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.”

The booksellers who contracted with Johnson for the performance of this work were Messrs. R. Dodsley, Charles Hitch, Andrew Miller, the two Messrs. Longman, and the two Messrs. Knapton. The price stipulated was fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds. The prospectus was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield. Although fully aware of the arduous nature of this undertaking, Johnson commenced and prosecuted it with an undaunted spirit. Dr. Adams found him one day busied upon it, when the following conversation ensued :—*Adams.* “ This is a great work, sir. How are you to get all the etymologies ? ” *Johnson.* “ Why, sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others ; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs, who will help me with the Welsh.” *A.* “ But, sir, how can you do this in three years ? ” *J.* “ Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years.” *A.* “ But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their dictionary.” *J.* “ Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see ; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.”

For the mechanical part of his Dictionary Johnson employed six amanuenses, to whom he shewed a never-ceasing kindness. While the work was going forward, he resided part of the time in Holborn, and part in Gough Square, Fleet Street ; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. He began his toil by devoting

his first care to a diligent perusal of all such English writers as were most correct in their language ; and under every sentence which he meant to quote he drew a line, and noted in the margin the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. He then delivered these books to his clerks, who transcribed each sentence on a separate slip of paper, and arranged the same under the word referred to. By these means he collected the several words and their different significations ; and when the whole arrangement was alphabetically formed, he gave the definitions of their meanings, and collected their etymologies from Skinner, Junius, and other writers on the subject. In completing his alphabetical arrangement he consulted other dictionaries, to see if any words had escaped him. It is remarkable that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that, as Boswell remarks, one may read page after page of his Dictionary with improvement and pleasure ; and it should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no author whose writings had a tendency to injure sound religion and morality.

Nothing was allowed to Johnson by the booksellers for the necessarily large expenses of preparing this work for the press, over and above the price stipulated to be paid for the copyright. For the sake of relaxation from his literary toil, and probably also for Mrs. Johnson's health, he in the summer of 1748 visited Tunbridge Wells. Here he met Colley Cibber, Garrick, Samuel Richardson, Whiston the theologian, Onslow the speaker, Pitt, Lyttleton, and several other distinguished persons. With the same design, and a view to enjoy literary discussion, and amuse his evening hours, Johnson founded a club, which met weekly at the King's Head—a famous beef-steak house in Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row—every Tuesday. Thither he constantly resorted ; and with a disposition to please and be pleased, would pass those hours in a free and unrestrained interchange of sentiments, which otherwise had been spent at home, perhaps, in painful reflection. The persons associated with him in this pleasant society were, his dear friend Dr. Richard Bathurst, then a young physician, Mr. Hawkesworth, Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Hawkins, an attorney, and a few others of different professions. "At these meetings," says the last-named individual, "I had opportunities of observing, not only that in

conversation Johnson made it a rule to talk his best, but that on many subjects he was not uniform in his opinions—contending as often for victory as for truth. At one time *good*, at another *evil*, was predominant in the moral constitution of the world. Upon one occasion he would deplore the non-observance of Good Friday, and on another deny that among us of the present age there is any decline of public worship. He would sometimes contradict self-evident propositions; such as, that the luxury of this country has increased with its riches; and that the practice of card-playing is more general than heretofore. At this versatility of temper none, however, took offence; as Alexander and Cæsar were born for conquest, so was Johnson for the office of a symposiarch, to preside in all conversations; and I never saw a man who would venture to contest his right. Let it not, however, be imagined that the members of this our club met together with the temper of gladiators, or that there was wanting among them a disposition to yield to each other in all diversities of opinion; and, indeed, disputation was not, as in many associations of this kind, the purpose of the meeting, nor were their conversations restrained to particular topics. On the contrary, it may be said, that with the gravest discourses was intermingled

‘Mirth, that after no repenting draws.’

For not only in Johnson’s melancholy were there lucid intervals, but he was a great contributor to the mirth of conversation, by the many witty sayings he uttered, and the many excellent stories which his memory had treasured up, and he would on occasion relate; so that those are greatly mistaken who infer, either from the general tendency of his writings, or that appearance of hebetude which marked his countenance when living, and is discernible in the pictures and prints of him, that he could only reason and discuss, dictate and control. In the talent of *humour* there hardly ever was his equal.”

Mr. Murphy,¹ a better judge than Sir J. Hawkins, ob-

¹ Johnson’s acquaintance with this gentleman commenced in the following manner:—During the publication of the *Gray’s Inn Journal*—a periodical paper which was successfully carried on by Murphy alone, when a very young man—he happened to be in the country with Mr.

serves, that wit and humour were Johnson's "most shining talents." This should be borne in mind, says Croker, in reading his conversations; because much of that peculiarity called *humour* cannot be adequately conveyed in words; and many things may appear trite, dull, or offensively rude, in mere narration, which were enlivened or softened by the air and style of the delivery.

The Gentleman's Magazine for May 1748 contains his memoir of Roscommon, which he afterwards enlarged, improved, and inserted in his *Lives of English Poets*. In the same year he contributed the Preface to Dodsley's *Preceptor* — a work designed for the benefit of youth; and farther enriched the volume with 'The Vision of Theodore the Hermit, found in his cell,'¹ a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of existence; which he composed in one night, after finishing an evening at Holborn, and considered the best thing he ever wrote. He published in 1749 the *Vanity of Human Wishes, being the Tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated*,² which he wrote in the preceding year at Hampstead, where Mrs. Johnson was then lodging for the benefit of the country air. So rapidly was this poem produced, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them on paper till they were all finished. He received only five guineas from Dodsley for this composition, reserving to himself the right of

Foote; and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London, in order to get ready for the press one of the numbers of that journal, Foote said to him, " You need not go on that account. Here is a French magazine, in which you will find a very pretty oriental tale; translate that, and send it to your printer." Murphy followed Foote's advice. When he returned to town, this tale was pointed out to him in the *Rambler*, No. 190, from whence it had been translated into the French magazine. Murphy then called on Johnson to explain this curious incident. His talents, literature, and gentlemanly manners were soon perceived by Johnson, and a friendship was formed which was never broken. He died at Knightsbridge, June 18, 1805, in his eighty-second year.

¹ This will be found in *Fables and Allegories*. 18mo. London, Burns.

² An amusing anecdote is connected with that part of this poem in which the life of a scholar (with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fame and fortune) is delineated. Johnson one day, some years afterwards, was reading the satire; and, on coming to the above passage, he burst into a passion of tears. Mr. Thrale's family and a Mr. Scott only were present. Scott, in a jocose manner, clapped him on the back and said, " What's all this, my dear sir? Why you, and I, and *Hercules*, you know, were all troubled with melancholy." He was a very large man, and made out the triumvirate with Johnson and *Hercules* comically enough.

printing one edition of it—a practice he adopted in regard to the sale of all his writings; it being his fixed intention eventually to publish, for his own profit, a complete collection of his works. It may be interesting to peruse Byron's observations on this able satire. He remarks: "Jan. 9, 1821. Read Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*: all the examples, and mode of giving them, sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. I do not so much admire the opening. . . . But 'tis a grand poem, and so *true!*—true as the Tenth of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages *changes* all things—time, language, the earth, the bounds of the sea, the stars of the sky, and every thing 'about, around, and underneath' man, *except man himself*. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death; and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment."



CHAPTER III.

Irene performed at Drury Lane. Johnson frequents the green-room. Publishes the *Rambler*. Writes a Prologue to *Comus*. Anna Williams. Death of Johnson's wife. The Funeral Sermon. Inscription. Epitaph. Robert Levett. Sir Joshua Reynolds. Bennet Langton. Topham Beauclerk. Johnson contributes to the *Adventurer*. Writes *Life of Cave*. Visits Oxford. Obtains the degree of Master of Arts. Publishes his *Dictionary*. Writes a severe letter to Lord Chesterfield. Is arrested for debt. He contributes to the *Universal Visitor*. Defends the use of tea. His excessive fondness for that beverage. He commences the *Idler*. Death of Johnson's mother. Passages from his letters to her.

GARRICK now employed his power as manager of Drury Lane Theatre to bring out Johnson's long-finished tragedy of *Irene*; in which benevolent design he was somewhat thwarted by his friend, who could not brook that a drama which he had composed with much study should be revised and altered "at the pleasure of an actor." A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. "Sir," said he, "the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels." He was, however, at last prevailed on to comply, to some extent, with Garrick's wishes.

On the first night of the representation of *Irene*, before the curtain was drawn up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed the author's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself, soothed the audience; or, as Boswell suggests, awed them, by the extraordinary spirit and dignity of the following lines:

" Be this at least his praise, be this his pride,
To force applause no modern arts are tried :
Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,
He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound ;
Should welcome sleep release the weary wit,
He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit ;

No snares to captivate the judgment spreads,
Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.
Unmoved, though witlings sneer and rivals rail,
Studious to please, yet not ashamed to fail,
He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,
With merit needless, and without it vain.
In Reason, Nature, Truth, he dares to trust ;
Ye fops, be silent ; and ye wits, be just.”

The play was much applauded till it came to the conclusion ; when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled on the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bowstring round her neck. The audience cried out “Murder ! Murder !” She made several attempts to speak ; and at last was obliged to go off the stage alive. This passage was afterwards erased, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes. Notwithstanding all the support of able performers, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy did not please the public so well as was anticipated. But although it did not indeed become what is called a stock-play, it ran nine nights at least ; so that Johnson had his three nights’ profits—in all, very nearly 300*l.* He sold the copyright to Dodsley for 100*l.*, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition. So sanguine were his expectations of the success of *Irene*, that he was far from satisfied with its reception ; and inferring thence that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, never made another attempt in that species of composition. When asked how he felt upon the comparative failure of his play, he answered, “Like the monument.” On the occasion of its representation, he fancied that, as a dramatic author, his dress should be gayer than ordinary ; and he accordingly appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side-boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. His attendance while the tragedy was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him into the society of many of the male and female actors. With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to befriend them. For a considerable time he used to frequent the green-room, and dissipate his gloom “by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there. But at last he denied

himself this amusement," from considerations of "rigid virtue."

"In 1750," relates Boswell, "Johnson came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified—a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom." The vehicle which he selected was that of a periodical paper, called the *Rambler*, of the same nature as the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*; since the publication of which, an interval had now elapsed sufficiently long to justify his impression, that to many of his readers this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the attraction of novelty. With what devout sentiments he began this undertaking, is shewn in a prayer which he composed and offered up on the occasion.

The first paper of the *Rambler* appeared on Tuesday, the 20th of March, 1749-50; and Johnson continued it without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till Saturday, the 14th of March, 1752, on which day it closed. Notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and the labour of his *Dictionary*, he furnished two numbers of this periodical a week (with three or four exceptions) all that time. Many of these were written in haste, without even being read over by him before they were printed. This facility of composition may be ascribed to the fact, that, by reading and meditation, and very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge; which, by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever at his command, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most fit and energetic language. That Johnson was not altogether unprepared as a periodical writer, appears from a small ms. volume still preserved, in which he has written a variety of hints for papers on different subjects. The proportion which they bear to the number of essays is, however, very small. From a memorandum on the first blank leaf, we learn that, of the whole two hundred and eight *Ramblers*, only thirty were formed of materials previously provided; and the papers so framed are elaborated with such power and eloquence, that we almost lose sight of the hints, which become like "drops in the bucket." The gravity and solemnity which distinguish the *Rambler* from other periodicals were at first prejudicial to its popularity; yet very soon after its commencement, its uncommon excellence was

felt and acknowledged by many; and Mrs. Johnson, in whose taste and judgment her husband had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers had been published, “I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this.” The fame of the Rambler gradually increased; and its author lived to see ten large editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland. Its excellence is undoubtedly great. Even the most condensed and brilliant sentences which it contains, and which have been selected under the name of ‘Beauties,’ are of considerable bulk. In few writings can be found (to adopt Boswell’s phraseology) more *bark and steel for the mind*—more that can brace and invigorate every manly and noble sentiment. Though instruction be confessedly its chief design, it is yet enlivened with allegorical and oriental tales, and other subjects of amusement. Several of its characters are drawn so naturally, that when it first circulated in numbers, a club at Rumford, Essex, imagined themselves to be severally the victims of its satire, and that one of their coterie diverted himself by giving to the public the portraits of all the rest. Filled with wrath against the traitor of Rumford, one of them resolved to write to the printer, and inquire the author’s name. *Samuel Johnson* was the reply. No more was necessary: Samuel Johnson was the name of the curate; and soon each began to load him with reproaches for turning his friends into ridicule in a manner so cruel and unprovoked! In vain did the guiltless cleric protest his innocence; and at length, unable to contend any longer, he wrote to London, and brought back full information respecting the writer.

Every page of the above work exhibits a mind teeming with classical allusion and poetical imagery. The style has been censured (and not altogether unreasonably) as involved and turgid. Some persons have averred that the *hard words* in the Rambler were used by the author to render his Dictionary indispensably necessary; and it must be owned that the occurrence of such terms, for example, as “cremation,” “decussation,” “empyreumatic,” and “papilionaceous” in its pages, affords some colour for this assertion.

Johnson’s just abhorrence of Milton’s political and religious opinions did not blind him to his great poetical merit, to

which he has done “illustrious justice :” and in 1750, he not only wrote a Prologue which was spoken by Garrick before the representation of *Comus* at Drury Lane Theatre, for the benefit of Milton’s grand-daughter, but was eagerly and zealously interested in the success of the charity. During the following year he was occupied with his Dictionary and the Rambler, and he also wrote a biography in the *Student, or Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany*, and some minor compositions. Although his circumstances at this time were far from easy, he shewed great kindness to Miss (or, by courtesy, *Mrs.*) Anna Williams, the daughter of a Welsh physician. This lady (who appears to have been an extremely interesting though plain person, of “uncommon firmness of mind, a boundless curiosity, a retentive memory, and strong judgment,”) having journeyed to London in the hope of being cured of a cataract which afterwards ended in total blindness, was received as a constant visitor at his home while Mrs. Johnson lived ; and after her decease, having gone thither for the convenience of undergoing an operation for the recovery of her sight, she resided with him during the rest of her life, at all times when he had a house.

In the same year and month in which the last number of the Rambler was published, Mrs. Johnson’s death took place. This event happened in her sixty-third year, on the night of the 17th March, 1752 ; and Johnson immediately sent a letter to the Rev. Dr. Taylor, stating his calamity with the strongest expressions of sorrow. Taylor received it at his house in the Cloisters, Westminster, about three in the morning ; and hastening to his friend, found him weeping and in extreme agitation. After being a little while together they joined in prayer, and thus was the afflicted widower in some degree consoled. He deposited his wife’s remains in the church of Bromley, Kent, and composed her funeral sermon : a production which cannot, observes Boswell, be read without wonder, when it is considered that it was written in such trouble of mind, and “in the short interval between her death and burial.”

That his sufferings upon his bereavement were severe beyond what are commonly endured, there is ample evidence ; as also that he regarded his wife’s memory with a deep affection, which was not impaired by the lapse of years. He

commemorated her demise with tears and prayers for her soul.¹ The wedding-ring she received on becoming his bride was, as long as he lived, carefully preserved by him in a little round wooden box, on the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters :

“ Eheu !
Eliz. Johnson,
Nupta Jul. 9°, 1736.
Mortua, eheu !
Mart. 17°, 1752.”

A few months before his own decease, Johnson honoured her memory by an epitaph, in which he styled her “ *multum amatam diuque defletam.* ”

Very shortly after his loss he received the condoling visits of his friends, among whom were Garrick, Bathurst, Hawkesworth, Cave, Dodsley, the Earl of Orrery, and Mr. Robert Levett—originally a waiter in a Parisian coffee-house, and afterwards an obscure practiser of physic among the poor. Johnson’s acquaintance with him began in 1746; and such was the sage’s predilection for this humble mediciner, that he used to say he should not be satisfied, though attended by the whole College of Physicians, unless he had Mr. Levett with him. That individual resided above twenty years under Johnson’s hospitable roof. He was, according to Boswell, of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manners, and he seldom said a word when any company was present.

Johnson’s first interview with Sir Joshua (then Mr.) Reynolds occurred about this time at the house of some common friends, the Misses Cotterell, daughters of the Admiral of that name. He was so pleased by a casual remark of Reynolds’ on this occasion that he went home and supped with him, and their acquaintance soon warmed into friendship. Sir Joshua

¹ “ March 28, 1753. I kept this day, as the anniversary of my Betty’s death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful.” “ O LORD, so far as it may be lawful in me, I command to Thy fatherly goodness the soul of my departed wife ; beseeching Thee to grant her whatever is best in her present state, and finally receive her to eternal happiness.” *Prayers and Meditations.* It is related that Mrs. Johnson indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London ; and that “ she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality of a wife.”

relates a “characteristical” anecdote of Johnson about this period. When they were one evening together at the above ladies’, the Duchess of Argyle came in. Johnson, thinking that his hostesses were too much engrossed by her, and that he and his friend were neglected as low company, of whom they were ashamed, waxed wroth ; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Reynolds, saying, “I wonder which of us two could get most money at his trade in one week, were we to work hard at it from morning to night?”—as if they had been common mechanics. Johnson used to mention this incident with great glee.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq., of Langton, Lancashire (whose name will frequently occur in these pages), began soon after the completion of the Rambler. The above gentleman, then a youth, had read that periodical with so much admiration, that he went to London with the view of being introduced to the author. Luckily, he took lodgings at a house were Levett frequently visited. They met, and by Levett’s instrumentality Langton obtained access to Johnson, whose huge uncouth figure, dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and loosely-hanging clothes, greatly astonished his young admirer, who expected to behold a well-dressed and remarkably decorous philosopher. The conversation of Johnson, however, was so rich, animated, and forcible, and his religious and political sentiments so congenial to Langton, that he conceived for him a veneration and attachment which he ever preserved. Langton went to Trinity College, Oxford, where he became intimate with his fellow-student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk, of the St. Alban’s family,—a gentleman of gay habits and lax principles, but of fascinating manners and an acute understanding, with whom, shortly after, Johnson himself became familiarly connected. “What a coalition!” said Garrick, when he heard of this : “I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Round-house.” “But I can bear testimony,” remarks Boswell, “that it was a very agreeable association.” Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and “wit” too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity and licentiousness ; and Johnson delighted in the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil.

He began 1753 with a prayer that, by the aid of God’s

HOLY SPIRIT, he might improve the time yet to be granted him to his eternal salvation. He now took an active share in the composition of Dr. Hawkesworth's *Adventurer*, and was very anxious for its success. The second volume of his Dictionary was commenced on the 3d of April in this year, on which occasion he composed the following prayer :

"O God, who hast hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labour, and in the whole task of my present state ; that when I shall render up, at the last day, an account of the talent committed to me, I may receive pardon, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Amen."

His acquaintance was now sought by persons of the first eminence in literature, and his house, in respect to the conversations there, became an academy. Many persons were desirous of adding him to the number of their friends. Invitations to dine with such of those as he liked, he so seldom declined, that he relates, "I never but once, upon a resolution to employ myself in study, balked an invitation out to dinner ; and then I stayed at home and did nothing." Little, however, did that convivial humour, which this confession seems to imply, retard the progress of the task in which he was employed. The conclusion, and also the perfection of his Dictionary, were objects from which his attention was not to be diverted. "The avocations," says Sir John Hawkins, "he gave way to were such only as, when complied with, served to invigorate his mind to the performance of his engagements to his employers and the public, and hasten the approach of the day that was to reward his labour with applause."

Notwithstanding his lexicographical labours, he found leisure, in 1754, to write a *Life of Edward Cave*, his early friend, patron, and paymaster. On the 6th of March, the works of Lord Bolingbroke were published by David Mallet. Johnson, hearing of their bad tendency, pronounced this memorable judgment upon the noble author and his editor : "Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had no resolution to fire it off himself, but left half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death!" This year he made an excursion to Oxford (at the beginning of the long vacation), for the

purpose of consulting the libraries there. The next morning after his arrival he visited Pembroke College, in company with the Rev. T. Warton, author of the *History of English Poetry*, and was much pleased to find all the college servants (particularly an old butler), whom he had left there still remaining. The master, Dr. Ratcliffe, received him very coolly, and did not even order a copy of the Dictionary, now within a few months of publication. On leaving his rooms, Johnson remarked, “*There* lives a man, who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it.” An execution of two or three criminals took place at Oxford during his visit. “Soon afterwards,” writes Warton, “one day at dinner, I was saying that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the gaol, and also a frequent preacher before the University, a learned man, but often thoughtless and absent, preached the condemnation sermon on repentance, before the convicts on the preceding day, Sunday; and that in the close he told his audience that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject the next LORD’s day. Upon which, one of our company, a doctor of divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked, that he had probably preached the same sermon before the University: ‘Yes, sir,’ says Johnson, ‘but the University were not to be hanged the next morning.’”

Owing to the exertions of Johnson’s friends, he received the degree of M.A. by diploma from Oxford in March, 1755. In a letter to Warton on the 20th of the same month, he observes, “I hope to see my Dictionary bound and lettered next week; *vastā mole superbus*.” Accordingly, this great monument of his learning and industry came out shortly afterwards; but not before the patience of the proprietors had been severely tried, and almost exhausted; the work having been protracted much beyond the time which Johnson had sanguinely fixed for its completion, and the copy-money all paid long before the task was finished. When the messenger, who carried the last sheet to Mr. Millar, the principal publisher, returned, Johnson inquired, “Well, what did he say?” “Sir,” was the answer, “he said, thank GOD, I have done with him.” “I am glad,” replied Johnson with a smile, “that he thanks GOD for any thing.” The Dictionary was to

have been dedicated to Lord Chesterfield, to whom we have before alluded ; but owing to indisposition or some other unknown cause, his lordship took no notice of Johnson's labours while they were in progress ; and, in consequence, the sturdy lexicographer determined that they should not be ushered into the world under Lord Chesterfield's patronage, as he had at first intended. A misunderstanding arose between the two parties. Johnson addressed the peer in a very civil but severe letter, in which he observed, " Seven years, my lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before."

Subsequently, Johnson declared that he had thought Chesterfield a lord among wits, and had only found him a wit among lords ; and the other revenged himself upon his uncourtly antagonist by calling him in his ' Letters' a " respectable Hottentot."

The Dictionary, with a Grammar and History of the English Language, was comprised in two folio volumes ; and the literary public contemplated with wonder so stupendous an undertaking achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such enterprises fit only for whole academies. The value of this noble publication is universally allowed. Its faults have been canvassed long ago, and are well known. Some of Johnson's definitions are erroneous, and some obscure things in themselves very clear. Into others, again, he introduces his own opinions and prejudices, while the original meaning of the words is not explained. Of this fault the following are amusing examples :

" *Whig*, the name of a faction.

Pension, an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country.

Pensioner, a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey his master.

Oats, a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

Excise, a hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but by *wretches* hired by those to whom excise is paid."

The conclusion to the Preface of the Dictionary is expressed in terms singularly desponding, considering that the author was then only in his forty-sixth year. He says, "I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and mis-carriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise." His constitutional melancholy, augmented by the recent loss of his wife, was then at its meridian; and he afterwards owned to Boswell that he had enjoyed happier days, and possessed many more friends, since that gloomy hour than before.

On the 13th of July, 1755, he wrote in his journal the following scheme of life for Sunday:

- "1. To rise early; and, in order to it, to go to sleep early on Saturday.
2. To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.
3. To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or my secession from it.
4. To read the Scripture methodically, with such helps as are at hand.
5. To go to church twice.
6. To read books of divinity, either speculative or practical.
7. To instruct my family.
8. To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week."

We find from Johnson's private devotions that, on the first day of 1756 he had then recovered from sickness, and in February that the sight of his eye was restored.¹ Having spent the money for which he had contracted to write his Dictionary during the progress of the work, he seems to have been, in this year, in great want, and to have been even arrested for debt, on which occasion his friend Samuel Richardson became his surety. His productions in 1756 were an Epitome, in octavo, of his Dictionary, and a few Essays in a monthly publication called the *Universal Visitor*. He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly periodical, entitled the *Literary Magazine*,

or Universal Review. His emoluments from this undertaking, and his coadjutors in it, have not been ascertained. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the fifteenth number; and "I think," remarks Boswell, "that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness, and vivacity of his mind than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others. The 'Preliminary Address' to the public is a proof how this great man could embellish with the graces of superior composition even so trite a thing as the plan of a magazine."

One of his contributions to this periodical contains a defence of the 'Chinese weed,' in reply to an 'Essay on tea and its pernicious consequences,' by a Mr. Hanway, who wrote an angry answer, to which Johnson, "after a full and deliberate pause," replied; the only instance in the whole course of his life when he condescended to oppose any thing that was written against him. Johnson wrote *con amore* in support of his favourite beverage. In his review of Hanway's production, he candidly describes himself as "a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has, for many years, diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning."¹

¹ Two anecdotes, illustrative of Johnson's excessive fondness for tea, may suitably be inserted here. Once, when Sir Joshua Reynolds reminded him at the house of Mr. Cumberland that he had drunk eleven cups, he replied, "Sir, I did not count your glasses of wine; why should you number up my cups of tea?" And then laughing, in perfect good-humour, he added, "Sir, I should have released the lady from any further trouble, if it had not been for your remark; but you have reminded me that I want one of the dozen, and I must request Mrs. Cumberland to round up my number." When he saw the readiness and complacency with which his hostess obeyed his call, he turned a kind and cheerful look upon her, and said, "Madam, I must tell you, for your comfort, you have escaped much better than a certain lady did awhile ago, upon whose patience I intruded greatly more than I have done on yours; but the lady asked me for no other purpose than to make a zany of me, and set me gabbling to a parcel of people I knew nothing of; so, madam, I had my revenge of her, for I swallowed five-and-twenty cups of her tea, and did not treat her with as many words." On another occasion, whilst on his Scottish tour, and spending some time at Dunvegan, a lady, having repeatedly helped him, until she had poured out sixteen cups, inquired whether a small basin would not save him trouble, and be more agreeable? "I wonder, madam," he answered roughly, "why all the ladies ask me such questions. It is to save yourselves trouble, madam, and not me." The lady was silent, and resumed her task. Johnson's teapot is preserved, and contains above two quarts.

This year he resumed his scheme of giving an edition of Shakespeare with notes, and issued proposals of considerable length, in which he promised that it should appear before Christmas 1757; yet nine years elapsed before it was published. About this period he was offered a rectory of considerable value in Lincolnshire, by Mr. Langton, the father of his friend before mentioned. He declined this preferment, partly because he believed that his temper and habits disqualified him for the assiduous and familiar instruction of the poor and ignorant, and partly because he was too attached to London to endure the thought of leaving it.

Johnson seems to have printed nothing of consequence in 1757. On the 15th of April, 1758, he began a new periodical paper, entitled the *Idler*, which came out every Saturday, in a weekly newspaper, called the *Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette*. These essays were continued till April the 5th, 1760.¹ Many of them were written as rapidly as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton relates that Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asked him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and, on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well." He upon this instantly sat down and finished an 'Idler,' which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having expressed a wish to read it, "Sir," he replied, "you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it up and sent it off. The *Idler* has been characterised as having "less body and more spirit" than its predecessor; yet it contains several papers which shew as much profundity of thought and labour of language as any of Johnson's writings.

In January 1759 his mother died, at the great age of ninety; an event which elicited the same strong affection, and the same deep-rooted dread of death by which our great philosopher was always distinguished. Being confined to the neighbourhood of London by his pursuits, he had not seen his aged parent for some years previous to her decease (a circumstance which he deeply lamented), although he had

¹ Of a hundred and three, their total number, twelve were contributed by his friends; of which Nos. 33, 93, and 96, were written by Mr. Thomas Warton; No. 67 by Mr. Langton; and Nos. 76, 79, and 82, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; the concluding words of No. 82—"and pollute his canvass with deformity"—being added by Johnson.

contributed liberally to her support. His behaviour to her altogether was that of a dutiful son and a good Christian. Shortly before her demise he addressed to her several letters, from which the following touching passages are selected :

"The account which Miss¹ gives me of your health pierces my heart. GOD comfort and preserve you, and save you, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. I would have Miss read to you, from time to time, the Passion of our SAVIOUR, and sometimes the sentences in the Communion Service, beginning—'Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Pray send me your blessing, and forgive all that I have done amiss to you. And whatever you would have done, and what debts you would have paid first, or any thing else that you would direct, let Miss put it down ; I shall endeavour to obey you. I pray often for you ; do you pray for me. I fear you are too ill for long letters ; therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray GOD to bless you evermore, for JESUS CHRIST's sake, Amen."

Johnson's remarks after her dissolution are as excellent as they are simple. He says, in a letter to Miss Porter, " You

¹ Miss Lucy Porter, Johnson's step-daughter, and (according to Anna Seward) the earliest object of his love. The same authority states that "she was one of those few beings who, from a sturdy singularity of temper, and some prominent good qualities of head and heart, was enabled, even in her days of scanty maintenance, to make society glad to receive and pet the grown spoiled child. Affluence was not hers till it came to her in her fortieth year by the death of her eldest brother [in 1763]. From the age of twenty till that period she had boarded with Dr. Johnson's mother, who still kept that bookseller's shop by which her husband had supplied the scanty means of subsistence. Meantime Lucy Porter kept the best company in our little city, but would make no engagement on market-days, lest granny, as she called Mrs. Johnson, should catch cold by serving in the shop. By these good traits in her character were the most respectable inhabitants of Lichfield induced to bear, with kind smiles, her mulish obstinacy and perverse contradictions. Johnson himself set the example, and extended to her that compliant indulgence which he shewed not to any other person. I have heard her scold him like a schoolboy for soiling her floor with his shoes ; for she was clean as a Dutchwoman in her house, and exactly neat in her person. Dress, too, she loved in her odd way ; but we will not assert that the Graces were her handmaids. Friendly, cordial, and cheerful to those she loved, she was more esteemed, more amusing, and more regretted than many a polished character, over whose smooth but insipid surface the attention of those who have mind passes listless and uninterested." Miss Porter survived Dr. Johnson just thirteen months. She died at Lichfield, in her seventy-first year, January 13, 1786.

will conceive my sorrow for the loss of my mother—of the best mother. If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her; and for me, since I cannot repair my faults to her, I hope repentance will efface them."



CHAPTER IV.

Johnson publishes *Rasselas*. Breaks up his establishment. Goes to Oxford. Francis Barber. Extract from Johnson's *Meditations*. Johnson visits Lichfield. Receives a pension from George III. Accompanies Sir Joshua Reynolds into Devonshire. Becomes acquainted with Boswell. Oliver Goldsmith. The *Vicar of Wakefield*. Johnson's Jacobitism. His definition of Whiggism. His library. Subordination and equality. Johnson's fondness for the society of the young. Melancholy. Mrs. Macauley. Influence of the weather. Fleet Street. A "woman preaching." Convocation. Johnson accompanies Boswell to Harwich. His love of eating. His refutation of Bishop Berkeley's theory. His mode of life during 1763. Visit to Lancashire. The "Literary Club." Return of Johnson's hypochondria. His odd gestures and peculiarities. Visit to Dr. Percy and Cambridge. Extracts from Johnson's *Meditations*.

IN order to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral, and some little debts which she had left, Johnson, in the evenings of one week, wrote his *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, which has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages of Europe. "This tale," remarks Boswell, "with all the charms of Oriental imagery, and all the force and beauty of which the English language is capable, leads us through the most important scenes of human life, and shews us that this stage of our being is full of 'vanity and vexation of spirit.'" Dodsley and two other booksellers purchased the copyright of this work for a hundred pounds (to which they afterwards added twenty-five pounds more), and it was published in the April of 1759.

In a note to Miss Porter, dated March 23d of the same year, Johnson informs her that "he had on that day removed from Gough-square, where he had resided ten years, into chambers at Staple Inn." The necessity of retrenching his ex-

penditure was the cause of his breaking up his establishment. Shortly after, he again migrated to Gray's Inn, and Mrs. Williams took a lodging in the neighbourhood of their former dwelling. The profits arising from the sale of the *Idler*, and the subscriptions which, from the year 1756, he was receiving for his projected edition of Shakespeare, were the only known means of his subsistence for a period of near four years. It will be remembered that the first of the above works was carried on through 1759. It was probably at this time that his apartments were so poorly furnished that even a chair was scarcely to be had in them, and that a gentleman who frequently visited him while writing the *Idlers*, constantly found him at his desk, sitting on a chair with three legs, the defect of which, on rising from it, Johnson never forgot, but would either hold it in his hand, or place it with great composure against some support, taking no notice of its imperfection to his visitor.

In the July of this year he went for a few days to Oxford, of which visit the following brief notice in his own words is preserved :

“ _____ is now making tea for me. I have been in my gown ever since I came here. It was at my first coming quite new and handsome. I have swam thrice, which I had disused for many years. I here proposed to Vansittart climbing over a wall, but he has refused me. And I have clapped my hands till they are sore at Dr. King's speech.”¹

His faithful negro servant, Francis Barber, who entered his service about a fortnight after Mrs. Johnson's decease, having left him for some unexplained reason, and gone to sea, Johnson interested himself to procure his discharge, which, by the agency of the notorious John Wilkes, was obtained, contrary, it seems, to the wishes of Barber, who returned to his kind master's service notwithstanding.

During 1760, in which year Johnson abandoned his chambers in Gray's Inn for others at No. 1, Inner Temple Lane, “he was,” says Boswell, “either very idle or very busy with his Shakespeare.” Mr. Murphy affirms that the former was the case, and that “Mr. Fitzherbert (the father

¹ At the installation of John, Earl of Westmoreland, as Chancellor of the University, July 7, 1759.

of Lord St. Helen's) used to say, that he paid a morning visit to Johnson, intending from his chambers to send a letter into the city; but, to his great surprise, he found an author by profession without pen, ink, or paper." In Johnson's scrupulous examination of himself, on Easter-eve 1761, he laments that his life, since the preceding Feast of the Resurrection, had been "dissipated and useless." He adds, "My terrors and perplexities have so much increased that I am under great depression and discouragement; yet I purpose to present myself before GOD to-morrow, with humble hope that HE will not break the bruised reed."

"Come unto Me all ye that travail.

"I have resolved, I hope not presumptuously, till I am afraid to resolve again. Yet, hoping in GOD, I stedfastly purpose to lead a new life. O GOD, enable me, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

My purpose is,

To avoid idleness.

To regulate my sleep as to length and choice of hours.

To set down every day what shall be done the day following.

To keep a journal.

To worship GOD more diligently.

To go to church every Sunday.

To study the Scriptures.

To read a certain portion every week."

Part of the winter of the year last named was spent by Johnson at Lichfield; "where," he remarks, "I found the streets much narrower and shorter than I thought I had left them, inhabited by a new race of people, to whom I was very little known. My playfellows were grown old, and forced me to suspect that I was no longer young. My only remaining friend has changed his principles, and was become the tool of the predominant faction. My daughter-in-law, from whom I expected most, and whom I met with sincere benevolence, has lost the beauty and gaiety of youth, without having gained much of the wisdom of age. I wandered about for five days, and took the first convenient opportunity of returning to a place [London] where, if there is not much

happiness, there is at least such diversity of good and evil, that slight vexations do not fix upon the heart."

In a letter to his friend Baretti,¹ dated "June 10, 1761," he observes in reference to George III. :

" You know we have a new king of whom we are so much inclined to hope great things, that most of us begin already to believe them. The young man is hitherto blameless ; but it would be unreasonable to expect much from the immaturity of juvenile years, and the ignorance of princely education."

The event alluded to in the above paragraph was fraught with great benefit to Johnson, who, early in 1762, received an annual pension from the young monarch of three hundred pounds, solely as the reward of his literary merit, without any stipulation whatever, or even the tacit understanding that he should write for the administration.

The way in which Johnson received the announcement of this favour was as follows. Murphy, at the request of Lord Loughborough, " went without delay to the chambers in the Inner-Temple Lane, which, in fact, were the abode of wretchedness. By slow and studied approaches the message was disclosed. Johnson made a long pause ; he asked if it was seriously intended ? He fell into a profound meditation, and his own definition of a pensioner occurred to him. He was told, 'that he, at least, did not come within the definition.' He desired to meet next day and dine at the Mitre tavern. At that meeting he gave up all his scruples. On the following day Lord Loughborough conducted him to the Earl of Bute," who was then prime minister. The addition of his pension to what he was able to earn by the ordinary exercise of his talents, raised him to a state of comparative affluence, and afforded him the means of assisting many whose real or pretended wants had formerly excited his compassion. He now practised a rule which he often recommended to his friends, always to go abroad with some loose money to give

¹ Joseph Baretti, a native of Turin, in Piedmont, Italy, was author of an Italian and English Dictionary, and other creditable works. He was intimately acquainted with Johnson and most of the wits of his time. He came to England in 1753, and died in London in 1789. More than one allusion will be made to him in the following pages.

to beggars.¹ When visiting Lichfield towards the latter part of his life, he was accustomed on his arrival to deposit with Miss Porter as much cash as would pay his expenses back to London. He could not trust himself with his own money ; as he felt himself unable to resist the importunity of the numerous claimants on his benevolence.

This year Sir Joshua Reynolds paid a visit of some weeks to Devonshire, his native county, in company with Johnson, who was much pleased with his excursion, and declared he had derived from it a great accession of new ideas. He was entertained at the seats of several noblemen and gentlemen :² but the greatest part of this time was passed at Plymouth, where he saw a great many of the inhabitants, and evinced much anxiety for their welfare, as is apparent from the following anecdote related by Sir Joshua to Boswell. Having observed that in consequence of the dockyard a new town had arisen about two miles off as a rival to the old, he concluded that this modern and rising suburb could not but excite the envy and jealousy of its elder neighbour, in which conjecture he was very soon confirmed ; he therefore set himself resolutely on the side of the old, the *established* town in which his lot was cast, considering it his duty to *stand by* it. He ac-

¹ "With advising others to be charitable," says Mrs. Piozzi, "however, Dr. Johnson did not content himself. He gave away all he had, and all he ever had gotten, except the two thousand pounds he left behind ; and the very small portion of his income which he spent on himself, with all our calculation, we never could make more than seventy, or, at most, four-score pounds a-year ; and he pretended to allow himself a hundred." In illustration of Johnson's benevolence, it may be related that, at a time when he was very poor, he often, as he returned to his lodgings at one or two o'clock in the morning, put pennies into the hands of the children he found asleep on thresholds and stalls, to buy them a breakfast.

² At one of these mansions he was taken out to walk in the garden. The master of the house, thinking it proper to introduce something scientific into the conversation, addressed him thus : "Are you a botanist, Dr. Johnson ?" "No, sir," answered Johnson, "I am not a botanist ; and," alluding doubtless to his near-sightedness, "should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile." At another seat in Devonshire, as he and the company were sitting in a saloon, before which was a spacious lawn, it was remarked as a very proper place for running a race. A young lady present boasted that she could outrun any person ; on which Johnson rose up and said, "Madam, you cannot outrun me ;" and, going out on the lawn, they started. The lady at first had the advantage ; but Johnson, happening to have slippers on much too small for his feet, kicked them off up into the air, and ran a great length without them, leaving the lady far behind him ; and, having won the victory, he returned, leading her by the hand, with looks of high exultation and delight.

cordingly entered warmly into its interests, and upon every occasion talked of the *Dockers* (as the inhabitants of the new town were called), as upstarts and aliens. Plymouth is very plentifully supplied with water by a river brought into it from a distance, which is so abundant that it runs to waste in the town. The Dock, or New Town, being totally destitute of water, petitioned Plymouth that a small portion of the conduit might go to them; and this was now under consideration. Johnson, affecting to entertain the passions of the place, was violent in opposition; and half laughing at himself for his pretended zeal, where he had no concern, exclaimed, "No, no! I am against the *Dockers*; I am a Plymouth-man. Rogues! let them die of thirst. They shall not have a drop!"

We now enter the memorable year (1763) in which Johnson became acquainted with James Boswell. This gentleman's first interview with the lexicographer took place on Monday the 16th of May, at the house of Mr. Davies, the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden. "At last," he records, "when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him . . . Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us—he announced his awful approach to me. . . . Mr. D. mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to D., 'Don't tell where I come from.' 'From Scotland,' cried D., roughly. 'Mr. Johnson,' said I, 'I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' . . . This speech was unlucky; for he seized the expression 'come from Scotland,' which I used in the sense of being from that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to D.: 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order

would be worth three shillings.' Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' 'Sir,' said he, with a stern look, 'I have known David Garrick longer than you have done; and I know no right you have to talk with me on the subject.' I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any farther attempts." Before the close of the evening, Boswell was left alone with Johnson, and succeeded in obtaining a little civility from him. Thus encouraged, and with Davies's sanction, the young Scotchman ventured to call at Johnson's chambers, Inner-Temple Lane. "He received me," says Boswell, "very courteously; but it must be confessed, that his apartment and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, 'Nay, don't go.' 'Sir,' said I, 'I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you.' He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, 'Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me.'"

Boswell had a second interview with Johnson on the 13th of June, and met him oddly enough, a few days afterwards, near Temple Bar, about one o'clock in the morning. On the evening of June 25, he accompanied him to the Mitre tavern in Fleet Street. "We had," he relates, "a good supper, and port wine, of which he then sometimes drank a bottle. The orthodox high-church sound of THE MITRE—the figure and manner of the celebrated SAMUEL JOHNSON—the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, pro-

duced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced."

On this occasion, Johnson in the course of conversation exclaimed to Boswell, "Give me your hand. I have taken a liking to you.—Sir, I am glad we have met. I hope we shall pass many evenings and mornings too together." And thus began that intimacy between these remarkable personages, which continued so long and uninterrupted, and was, in its consequences, so beneficial to sound learning and religion.

We are not informed when Johnson became personally known to OLIVER GOLDSMITH, the celebrated author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*;¹ but at the date at which we have now arrived, they were accustomed to sup together at the tavern whose orthodox denomination had afforded the enthusiastic Boswell such heartfelt satisfaction: and it appears that Goldsmith's respectful attachment to Johnson was then at its height; for his own literary reputation had not yet distinguished him so much as to excite a vain desire of competition with his great master. Boswell met them for the first time together at the Mitre on July 1, 1763. At this period, Miss Williams had lodgings in Bolt Court, Fleet Street; and Johnson always drank tea with her before he went home, however late it might be; and she always sat up for him.²

¹ It was through Johnson's friendly interference that this novel was sold. We insert here his amusing account of this transaction. "I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

² On one of these occasions, between four and five in the morning, Johnson said to his hostess, "Take notice, madam, that for once I am here before others are asleep. As I turned into the court I ran against a knot of bricklayers." "You forget, my dear sir," replied Miss Williams, "that these people have all been a-bed, and are now preparing for their day's work." "Is it so, then, madam?" he answered; "I confess that circumstance had escaped me."

Upon leaving the tavern after supper on the day just mentioned, Goldsmith went with Johnson, "strutting away" and calling to Boswell "with an air of superiority, like that of an esoteric over an exoteric disciple of a sage of antiquity, 'I go to Miss Williams.'" It was not long before the person thus addressed "obtained the same mark of distinction."

A few more interviews between the sage and his future biographer rendered the latter quite at ease in his company; and in a *tête-à-tête* on the 4th of July, Boswell alluded to the numerous reflections which had been thrown out against Johnson, on account of his having accepted a pension from the king. "Why, sir," he replied, with a hearty laugh, "it is a mighty foolish noise that they make. I have accepted of a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true that I cannot now curse (smiling) the house of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the house of Hanover, and drinking King James's health, are amply overbalanced with three hundred pounds a year."

Johnson's political sentiments were not really so ultra as might perhaps be inferred from these observations. He doubtless had an early attachment to the house of Stuart, and was fond of exercising both his pleasantry and ingenuity "in talking Jacobitism." One day, when dining with Mr. Langton, senior, where Miss Roberts, his niece, was one of the company, Johnson, with his usual attention to the fair sex, took her by the hand and said, "My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite." Mr. Langton seemed offended, and asked Johnson with great warmth, what he could mean by putting such a question to his niece? "Why, sir," was the reply, "I mean no offence to your niece; I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, sir, believes in the divine right of kings. He that believes in the divine right of kings believes in a divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of bishops. He that believes in the divine right of bishops believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. Therefore, sir, a Jacobite is neither an atheist nor a deist. That cannot

be said of a Whig ; for *Whiggism is a negation of all principle.*"

On July the 19th, Levett shewed his patron's library¹ to Boswell. It was contained in two garrets over his chambers. "I found," says B., "a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewed with manuscript leaves, in Johnson's own handwriting, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they might perhaps contain portions of the Rambler or of Rasselas. I observed an apparatus for chemical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favourable for retirement and meditation. Johnson told me, that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant when he wanted to study secure from interruption ; for he would not allow his servant to say that he was not at home when he really was. 'A servant's strict regard for truth,' said he, 'must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial ; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself?*'"

The next day, Boswell and Johnson supped together, when the latter observed in reply to the position that intrinsic merit *ought* to make the only distinction among mankind : "Why, sir, mankind have found this cannot be. How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit ? Were that to be the only distinction amongst mankind, we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it. Were all distinctions abolished, the strongest would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain a superiority by their bodily strength. But, sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind,—that is to say, all civilised nations,—have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank ; or his being appointed to certain offices gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no other enjoyment than mere animal pleasure."

¹ Mr. Tyers, the "Tom Restless" of the 48th Idler, says, "Johnson had a large but not a splendid library, near five thousand volumes. Many authors, not in hostility with him, presented him with their works. But his study did not contain half his books."

The following evening was spent by the great moralist and his disciple at a coffee-house in the Strand. "Sir," remarked Johnson at supper, "I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect." Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sank them much deeper in misery; and that labouring men, who work hard and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits. He again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank, and added, "Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.' I thus, sir, shewed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?"

On July 26th Boswell found Johnson alone. It was a wet day, and the former complained of the disagreeable effects of such weather. "Sir," replied Johnson, "this is all imagination;¹ for man lives in air, as a fish lives in water; so that, if the atmosphere press heavy from above, there is an equal resistance from below. To be sure, bad weather is hard upon people who are obliged to go abroad; and men cannot labour so well in the open air in bad weather as in good: but, sir, a smith or tailor, whose work is within doors, will surely do as much in rainy weather as in fair. Some

¹ Johnson's opinions on this subject subsequently underwent some change.

very delicate frames, indeed, may be affected by wet weather; but not common constitutions."

They went to Greenwich on the following Saturday, and, while walking in the evening in the Park, Johnson inquired, "Is not this very fine?" "Yes, sir," answered Boswell, "but not equal to Fleet Street." "You are right, sir," was the reply.

Next day, Sunday, July 31st, Boswell remarked that he had been that morning at a meeting of Quakers, where he had heard a woman preach. "Sir," said Johnson, "a woman preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

On Wednesday, August 3d, Boswell having determined to go to Utrecht to study, they had their last social meeting previous to his departure, at the Turk's Head coffee-house. Before they parted, Boswell unintentionally irritated his friend. He mentioned to him how common it was in the world to tell absurd stories of him, and to ascribe to him very strange sayings. "What do they make me say, sir?" asked Johnson. "Why, sir," answered Boswell, laughing heartily, "as an instance very strange indeed, David Hume told me, you said that you would stand before a battery of cannon to restore the Convocation to its full powers." With a determined look the Christian philosopher thundered out, "And would I not, sir? Shall the Presbyterian *Kirk* of Scotland have its General Assembly, and the Church of England be denied its Convocation?" "He was walking up and down the room," relates Boswell, "when I told him the anecdote; but when he uttered this explosion of high-church zeal, he had come close to my chair, and his eyes flashed with indignation."

Johnson accompanied his young friend to Harwich. They set out early in the morning of the 5th of August, and halted for the night at Colchester; of which town the former talked with veneration, for having stood a siege for Charles I. At supper he spoke of eating "with uncommon satisfaction;" and he was for the moment not only serious, but vehement. In connexion with this incident, Boswell owns that he never knew any man who relished the pleasures of the palate more than Johnson. "When at table," he says, "he was totally absorbed in the business of the mo-

ment: his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite. . . . Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man, either in eating or drinking.¹ . . . When invited to dine even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, ‘This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to ask a man to.’ On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day, when he had dined with his neighbour and landlord in Bolt Court, Mr. Allan, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: ‘Sir, we could not have had a better dinner, had there been a *synod of cooks*.’”

At Harwich, the travellers went into the church, and walked up to the altar, when Johnson said to his companion, “Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your CREATOR and REDEEMER.” After leaving the sacred edifice, they conversed upon Bishop Berkeley’s arguments in proof of the non-existence of matter. Boswell observed that, “though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it.” Johnson, with great alacrity, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone till he rebounded from it, answered, “I refute it thus.” It has been well remarked that Johnson seems to have been imperfectly aware of Berkeley’s doctrine; as his experiment only proves that we have the sensation of solidity; which Berkeley did not deny.

Boswell was attended by his “revered friend” to the

“Once, and but once,” says Steevens, “he is known to have had too much wine; a circumstance which he himself discovered, on finding one of his sesquipedalian words hang fire. He then started up, and gravely observed, “I think it time we should go to bed.”” For the last twelve years of his life he left off all fermented liquors. “To make himself some amends,” remarks Mrs. Piozzi, he took his chocolate liberally, pouring in large quantities of cream, or even melted butter; and was so fond of fruit, that, though he would eat seven or eight large peaches of a morning before breakfast began, and treated them with proportionate attention after dinner again, yet I have heard him protest that he never had quite as much as he wished of wall-fruit, except once in his life.”

beach, where they embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. "I hope, sir," he said, "you will not forget me in my absence." "Nay, sir," replied the sage, "it is more likely you should forget me than I should forget you." "As the vessel put out to sea," relates his disciple, "I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner; and at last I perceived him walk back into town, and he disappeared."

Some months elapsed before Boswell heard from Johnson, whose letter is dated "Dec. 8, 1763," and contains the following excellent advice, which we cite for the benefit of our juvenile readers :—

"Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incidental to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before."

Dr. William Maxwell (son of Dr. John Maxwell, Archdeacon of Downe in Ireland, and cousin of the Honourable Henry Maxwell, Bishop of Dromore in 1765) gives the following sketch of Johnson's mode of life during 1763: "About twelve o'clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed, or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levee of morning visitors, chiefly men of letters; Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, &c. &c., and sometimes learned ladies; particularly I remember a French lady of wit and fashion doing him the honour of a visit. He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of public oracle, whom every body thought they had a right to visit and consult; and, doubtless, they were well rewarded. I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern,

where he commonly stayed late, and then drank his tea at some friend's house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night; for I can scarcely recollect that he ever refused going with me to a tavern; and he often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation."

The "French lady" was La Comtesse de Boufflers. When she was first in this country, "she was desirous," relates Beauclerk, "to see Johnson. I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple Lane, when all at once I heard a voice like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who, it seems, upon a little reflection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and, eager to shew himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the staircase in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple gate, and, brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty-brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by this singular appearance."

Early in 1764 Johnson visited the Langton family at their seat in Lincolnshire. His friend Bennet Langton did his best to make the place agreeable to his distinguished friend, and the elder Mr. Langton and his lady "were not wanting in attention." This old gentleman is described as "a very tall, meagre, long-visaged man, much resembling a stork standing on one leg near the shore, in Raffaelle's cartoon of the miraculous draught of fishes." The sketcher of this portrait, Mr. Best, further observes, "His manners were in the highest degree polished; his conversation mild, equable, and always pleasing. I formed an intimacy with his son, and went to pay him a visit at Langton. After breakfast, we walked to the top of a very steep hill behind the

house. When we arrived at the summit, Mr. Langton said, ‘Poor dear Dr. Johnson, when he came to this spot, turned to look down the hill, and said he was determined ‘to take a roll down.’ When we understood what he meant to do, we endeavoured to dissuade him; but he was resolute, saying, ‘he had not had a roll for a long time;’ and taking out of his lesser pockets whatever might be in them,—keys, pencil, purse, or pen-knife,—and laying himself parallel with the edge of the hill, he actually descended, turning himself over and over till he came to the bottom.’”

Soon after Johnson’s return to London (in February) was founded that society, which existed long without a name, but at Garrick’s funeral received the title of the LITERARY CLUB. Sir Joshua Reynolds was the first proposer of it: and the original members were Reynolds, Johnson, Edmund Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins. They met every week at seven, and generally continued their conversation till a late hour. This club still exists, and meets at the Thatched House, in St. James’s Street. Among its present members are the Bishops of London and Llandaff, Lord Brougham, Dr. Buckland, &c.

During 1764 Johnson permitted his constitutional indolence (heightened by the ease and independence afforded him by his pension) to interfere with, and almost suspend his literary labours. On Easter-day he received the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and resolved at the altar, “in the presence of God, but without a vow, to repel sinful thoughts, to study eight hours daily, to go to church every Sunday, and read the Scriptures.” It was his custom to observe certain days with a “pious abstraction.” These were, New Year’s day, the day of his wife’s decease, Good Friday, Easter-day, and his own birthday, on which last he this year remarks in his *Meditations* :—

“I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving, having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O GOD, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep resolutions, for JESUS CHRIST’s sake. Amen.”

His old hypochondriac disorder returned with great se-

verity about this time. Dr. Adams, on being admitted to see him, found him in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly pacing from room to room.

"Talking to himself," says Boswell, "was one of his singularities ever since I knew him. I was certain that he was frequently uttering pious ejaculations;¹ for fragments of the Lord's Prayer have been distinctly heard." He had another peculiarity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. "I have," remarks Boswell, "upon innumerable occasions observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion." Miss Reynolds relates that, on entering her brother's house with Miss Williams, he would quit her hand, or else whirl her about on the steps as he whirled and twisted about to perform his gesticulations; and as soon as he had finished, he would give a sudden spring, and make an extensive stride over the threshold, Miss Williams the while standing groping about outside the door, unless the servant took hold of her hand to conduct her in, leaving Johnson to perform at the parlour-door much the same exercise over again. But it was not only at the entrance of a house or chamber that he would act these strange manœuvres, but across a room, or in the street with company, he would stop on a sudden and practise them to the amusement of standers by. "One Sunday morning," observes Miss Reynolds, "as I was walking with him in Twickenham meadows, he began his antics both with his feet and hands,—with the latter as if he was holding the reins of a horse, like a jockey on full speed. But to describe the strange position of his feet is a difficult task;² sometimes he

¹ See Dr. Percy's remark on this subject, ante, p. 10.

² Sir Joshua gives the following example of Johnson's *pedal* eccentricities:—"When he and I," he relates, "took a journey together into the

would make the back part of his heels to touch, sometimes his toes, as if he was aiming at making the form of a triangle,—at least the two sides of one.” As we are upon the subject of Johnson’s singularities, it will not be irrelevant to mention some others which belonged to him. “His laugh was as remarkable,” says Boswell, “as any circumstance in his manner. It was a kind of good-humoured growl.’ While talking, or even as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head on one side, towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too, too, too*: all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a whale. “This I suppose,” says Boswell, “was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind.”

Johnson spent some parts of the months of June, July, and August, of 1764, at Euston-Maudit, Northamptonshire, with Dr. Percy. He was accompanied by Miss Williams, whom Mrs. Percy found a very agreeable companion. Early in the following year he visited Cambridge for a couple of days. The principal object of this excursion was to see Mr. Farmer, who was subsequently master of Emmanuel College. In connexion with their intercourse on this occasion, an eye-

West, we visited the late Mr. Bankes, of Dorsetshire; the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started from his reverie, like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word.”

witness has narrated the following anecdote : “ In the height of our convivial hilarity, our great man exclaimed, ‘ Come, now, I’ll give you a test : now, I’ll try who is a true antiquary amongst you. Has any one of this company ever met with the *History of Glorianus and Gloriana?* ’ Farmer, drawing the pipe out of his mouth, followed by a cloud of smoke, instantly said, ‘ I’ve got the book.’ ‘ Gi’ me your hand, gi’ me your hand,’ said Johnson ; ‘ you are the man after my own heart.’ And the shaking of two such hands, with two such happy faces attached to them, could hardly, I think, be matched in the whole annals of literature.”

In Johnson’s pious meditations on Easter-day this year, he complains :

“ Since the last Easter I have reformed no evil habit ; my time has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me. Good LORD deliver me ! ”

He adds :

“ I purpose to rise at eight ; because, though I shall not yet rise early, it will be much earlier than I now rise—for I often lie till two—will gain me much time, and tend to a conquest over idleness, and give time for other duties. I hope to rise yet earlier.”

His gratitude and liberality have been rarely surpassed. There are examples of both in his diary for 1765, which may serve to bring this chapter to an agreeable close.

“ July 2d. I paid Mr. Simpson ten guineas, which he had formerly lent me in my necessity, and for which Tetty expressed her gratitude.

“ July 8. I lent Mr. Simpson ten guineas more.

“ July 16. I received seventy-five pounds. Lent Mr. Davies twenty-five.”



CHAPTER V.

Johnson receives the degree of Doctor of Laws. His prayer preparatory to engaging in politics. Publishes his *Shakespeare*. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. Pope and Dryden. Goldsmith's *Traveller*. Education. The Law. Dishonesty of Deists. Happiness. Convents. Courting the great. Johnson's roughness. He contributes to Mrs. Williams's *Miscellanies*. Dedications. Johnson's interview with the King. Catherine Chambers. Memoranda. Boswell follows Johnson to Oxford. Practice of the law. Lichfield. Future life of brutes. Johnson sends Barber to school. He is appointed Professor of Ancient Literature. Visits Oxford, Lichfield, and Brighton. Sunday. Good breeding. Whitfield's oratory. History. Duration of Parliament. London life. Second marriages. Garrick's "fond vivacity," waiting dinner. Goldsmith's dress. Congreve. Shakespeare. Petitioning. Feeling for others. Johnson appears as a witness in a court of justice. Tea with Mrs. Williams. Schemes of political improvement. Romanism. Presbyterians. Approach of death. Johnson's quarrel and reconciliation with Boswell.

ON the 8th of July, 1765, Trinity College, Dublin, conferred on Johnson the unsolicited distinction of the degree of Doctor of Laws. His great affection for the English Universities, and particularly for his Alma Mater, prevented him from receiving this honour as it was intended, and he never assumed the title which it bestowed.

He seems about this time to have entertained thoughts both of studying law and engaging in politics. The prayer which he composed in reference to the former of these projects, is as follows:

"Sept. 26. Almighty GOD, the giver of wisdom, without whose help resolutions are vain, without whose blessing study is ineffectual; enable me, if it be Thy will, to attain such knowledge as may qualify me to direct the doubtful, and instruct the ignorant; to prevent wrongs, and terminate contentions; and grant that I may use that knowledge which I shall attain to Thy glory and my own salvation, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake. Amen."

In the month after that mentioned in the foregoing extract, his long-promised edition of Shakespeare appeared. It is not unlikely that its birth was hastened at last by Churchill's upbraiding satire :

"He for subscribers¹ baits his hook,
And takes your cash ; but where's the book ?
No matter where ; wise fear, you know,
Forbids the robbing of a foe ;
But what, to serve our private ends,
Forbids the cheating of our friends ?"

On the night before the publication of the above work, Johnson supped with some friends in the Temple, who kept him up, "nothing loath," till past five the next morning. Much pleasantry was passing on the subject of commentator-ship, when, all on a sudden, the doctor, looking at his watch, cried out, "This is a sport to you, gentlemen ; but you do not consider that there are at most only four hours between me and criticism."

The edition was virulently attacked by a Dr. Kenrick, who wrote a good deal for the booksellers. One evening when some of his *opuscula* were mentioned, Dr. Goldsmith said he had never heard of them ; upon which Johnson remarked, "Sir, he is one of the many who have made themselves *public*, without making themselves *known*." In reference to his Shakespeare, he observes in a letter to Warton, "To tell the truth, as I felt no solicitude about this work, I receive no great comfort from its conclusion ; but yet am well enough pleased that the public has no farther claims upon me."

During this and the preceding year, Johnson was so engaged with the above publication as to have little leisure for any other literary occupation, or even for private correspondence. It was about this period that he was introduced into

¹ In the year 1763 a young bookseller, who was an apprentice to Mr. Whiston, waited on Johnson with a subscription to his *Shakespeare* ; and observing that the Doctor made no entry in any book of the subscriber's name, ventured diffidently to ask whether he would please to have the gentleman's address, that it might be properly inserted in the printed list of subscribers. "I shall print no list of subscribers," said Johnson, with great abruptness ; but almost immediately recollecting himself, added, very complacently, "Sir, I have two very cogent reasons for not printing any list of subscribers : one, that I have lost all the names ; the other, that I have spent all the money."

the family of Mr. Thrale, one of the wealthiest brewers in England, and M.P. for the borough of Southwark. His father is said to have worked at eight shillings a week for twenty years in the great brewery which was afterwards his own. The proprietor of it, Edmund Halsey, Esq., had an only daughter who married Lord Cobham. On Mr. Halsey's death, the brewery was to be sold ; and after some time, was transferred to Thrale for 30,000*l.*, security being taken upon the property. In eleven years he paid the purchase-money. He gave his children the best education. His son associated at Oxford with men of the first rank ; and upon his leaving the University received from his father an allowance of 1000*l.* per annum. Upon that gentleman's decease, his business was carried on by the younger Thrale, for whom Johnson entertained a sincere regard, as a person "of excellent principles, a good scholar, well skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English Squire." "I know no man," he once observed, "who is more master of himself and family than Thrale."¹ If he but holds up a finger he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant ; but he has ten times her learning : he is a regular scholar ; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms." The maiden name of the lady (Mrs. Thrale) here alluded to was Hester Lynch Salusbury. She was a woman of "lively talents, improved by education." Mr. Thrale was tall, well proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam or my Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was (says Boswell) "short, plump, and brisk."² Once when she appeared before Johnson in a dark-coloured gown, he remarked : " You little

¹ To the inquiry whether Mr. Thrale was a man of conversation, or only wise and silent ? Johnson once replied, " Why, sir, his conversation does not shew the minute hand,—but he generally strikes the hour very correctly."

² She is thus described by Miss Burney, the authoress of *Evelina* :— " Mrs. Thrale is a pretty woman still, though she has some defect in the mouth that looks like a cut or scar ; but her nose is very handsome, her complexion very fair ; she has the *embonpoint charmant*, and her eyes are blue and lustrous. She is extremely lively and chatty ; and shewed none of the supercilious or pedantic airs so freely, or rather so scoffingly, attributed to women of learning or celebrity ; on the contrary, she is full of sport, remarkably gay, and excessively agreeable. I liked her in every

creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?" This speech informs us of the idea the philosopher had of her person.

They became acquainted in the following manner: Murphy, who had long been a confidential friend of Mr. Thrale, persuaded him to wish eagerly for Johnson's conversation. The celebrity of Mr. Woodhouse, a shoemaker, whose verses were at that time the subject of common discourse, afforded an excuse for an invitation to Johnson to meet him. The great man came,¹ and was so well satisfied with his reception both by Thrale and his lady, and they were so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their hospitable board were more and more frequent; till, at last, he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark, and in their villa at Streatham.

In a letter to Boswell, dated "January 14, 1766," Johnson says :

"Apologies are seldom of any use. We will delay to your arrival the reasons, good or bad, which have made me such a sparing and ungrateful correspondent.² Be assured, for the present, that nothing has lessened either the esteem or love with which I dismissed you at Harwich. Both have been increased by all that I have been told of you by yourself or others; and when you return, you will return to an unaltered, and I hope, unalterable friend.

"As your father's liberality has indulged you with so long a ramble, I doubt not but you will think his sickness, or even his desire to see you, a sufficient reason for hastening your return. The longer we live, and the more we think,

thing except her entrance into the room, which was rather florid and flourishing, as who should say 'It's I!—no less a person than Mrs. Thrale!'" She was twenty-four or twenty-five years of age when her acquaintance with Johnson commenced. The above portrait was drawn some time after that event.

¹ "What I recollect best of the day's talk," says Mrs. Piozzi, "was his earnestly recommending Addison's works to Mr. Woodhouse as a model for imitation. 'Give nights and days, sir,' said he, 'to the study of Addison, if you mean either to be a good writer, or, what is more worth, an honest man.'" Some account of Woodhouse is given in Southe's *Essay on the Lives of Uneducated Poets*, p. 114.

² He had not written to Boswell before for upwards of two years.

the higher value we learn to put on the friendship and tenderness of parents and of friends. Parents we can have but once; and he promises himself too much, who enters life with the expectation of finding many friends. Upon some motive, I hope that you will be here soon; and am willing to think that it will be an inducement to your return, that it is sincerely desired by, dear sir, your affectionate humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON."

Boswell arrived in London in February, and found his learned friend in a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with a chamber on the ground floor, and Mr. Levett with one of the garrets. Francis, his black servant, was also with him. He received the young traveller with much kindness. From their discourse at this interview we select one or two remarkable passages. "I told him," relates Boswell, "that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus: 'Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses.' *Johnson*. 'Why, sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot.' He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in my absence, 'There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time.' Talking of education: "People have now-a-days," said he, "got a strange opinion that every thing should be taught by lectures. Now, I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken. I know nothing that can be best taught by lectures, except where experiments are to be shewn. You may teach chemistry by lectures; you might teach making of shoes by lectures."

At night they supped at the Mitre. In consequence of his illness before mentioned, Johnson now drank water or lemonade instead of wine; a fact which Boswell duly records. On this occasion the former made the observations which follow: "Why, sir, in the formulary and statutory part of the law, a plodding blockhead may excel; but in the ingenious and rational part of it, a plodding blockhead can never

excel.¹ . . . No honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity. . . . That all who are happy, are equally happy, is not true; a peasant and a philosopher may be equally *satisfied*, but not equally *happy*. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher. . . . I never was near enough to great men to court them. You may be prudently attached to great men, and yet independent. You are not to do what you think wrong; and, sir, you are to calculate, and not pay too dear for what you get. You must not give a shilling's worth of court for sixpence worth of good. But if you can get a shilling's worth of good for sixpence worth of court, you are a fool if you do not pay court."

Boswell's stay in London at this period was too brief to allow of his having many interviews with Johnson, for whom his veneration and admiration were in no degree lessened by his having had an opportunity of comparing him with many of the most celebrated persons of other countries. "The roughness, indeed," he remarks, "which sometimes appeared in his manners,² was more striking to me now, from my having been accustomed to the studied, smooth, complying habits of the continent; and I clearly recognised in him, not without respect for his honest conscientious zeal, the same indignant and sarcastical mode of treating every attempt to unhinge or weaken good principles."

On the 9th of March, Johnson tells his friend Bennet

¹ Johnson appears to have been fond of the law. When at Cambridge, in 1765, he said of Trinity Hall; "I like that college;" and gave as his reason, "Because I like the science that they study there." His aversion to the mathematics has been before mentioned. In reference to them he seems to have been of the same opinion as the late lamented Southey, who, in a letter to the writer of this note, observed: "A dislike to mathematics implies an unfitness for such studies. . . . I have long considered it exceedingly unwise to exact those studies from persons who have no aptitude for them, and to whom, for that reason, all time so employed is time lost."

² Alluding elsewhere to Johnson's "roughness," Boswell observes: "To obviate all the reflections which have gone round the world to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of a *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: 'Johnson, to be sure, has roughness in his manner; but no man alive has a more tender heart. *He has nothing of the bear but his skin.*'"

Langton, by letter, "I have risen every morning since new-year's day at about eight. When I was up, I have, indeed, done but little; yet it is no slight advancement to obtain, for so many years more, the consciousness of being." Two months later, he writes to the same gentleman: "I continue to rise tolerably well, and read more than I did. I hope something will yet come on it."

He this year contributed the Preface, and several of the pieces which compose a volume of Miscellanies by Miss Williams. This collection contains a poem "On the death of Stephen Gray, the electrician," which Boswell, on internal evidence, assigned to Johnson. He asked Miss Williams whether it was not his? "Sir," she replied, with some warmth, "I wrote that poem before I had the honour of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance." Boswell subsequently repeated this statement to his distinguished friend, who made answer: "It is true, sir, that she wrote it before she was acquainted with me; but she has not told you that I wrote it all over again except two lines." The only other of Johnson's productions in 1766, was the Dedication to the King, of Gwyn's *London and Westminster improved*. In that "courtly species" of composition he has seldom, if ever, been excelled; and though he never prefixed dedications to his own works, he wrote a very great number for other persons, in which he considered himself as by no means expressing his own sentiments. He told Boswell that "he believed he had dedicated to all the royal family round." It was indifferent to him what was the subject of the work dedicated, provided it were innocent.

February 1767 was characterised by an incident — one of the most remarkable that occurred in the life of Johnson, and most gratifying to his "monarchical enthusiasm." This was, his being honoured by a private conversation with George III. in the library at the Queen's house, which was occasionally visited by him. The King had directed that he might be told when Johnson next came there. Accordingly, when this happened, Dr. Barnard, the librarian, seeing the visitor deeply engaged with a book, stole round to the King, and informed him that the Doctor was in the library. He then lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, as far as a private door, of which his royal master had the key; and,

stepping forward to Johnson, who was still absorbed in study, whispered, "Sir, here is the King." Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was "courteously easy." Oxford was the first topic of discourse; and the comparative excellence of its libraries and those of Cambridge was discussed. The King next inquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not; for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. His Majesty then said, "I do not think you borrow much from any body." Johnson replied, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. "I should have thought so too," was the gratifying rejoinder, "if you had not written so well." Johnson subsequently observed upon this, that "no man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a king to pay: it was decisive." When asked by a friend whether he made any answer to this high eulogy, he said, "No, sir; when the King had said it, it was to be so; it was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign."

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal, Johnson replied, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life; but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to study much, compared with Dr. Warburton. From this, the conversation turned to that prelate, and his controversy with Lowth. Johnson observed, "Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best." The King said he was of the same opinion; adding, "You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case?" Johnson answered, he did not think there was. "Why, truly," remarked the King, "when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end."

After some further discourse on matters connected with literature, his Majesty asked if there were any other literary journals published in the kingdom, except the *Monthly* and *Critical Reviews*; and on being answered there was no other, inquired which of them was the best. Johnson replied, that the *Monthly Review* was done with more care, the *Critical* upon better principles, than its rival; adding,

that the authors of the *Monthly Review* were enemies to the Church. This the King said he was sorry to hear. His Majesty expressed a wish to have the literary biography of his country ably executed, and suggested that Johnson should undertake it—a recommendation with which the moralist promised to comply.

During the whole of the interview, Johnson conversed with profound respect, but still with a sonorous voice, in “his firm manly manner;” and as soon as the King had withdrawn, he expressed himself highly pleased with his sovereign’s conversation and gracious behaviour. To Mr. Barnard he remarked: “Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.” And he afterwards observed to another friend: “Sir, his manners are those of a fine gentleman, as we may suppose Louis XIV. or Charles II.”

A circle of Johnson’s acquaintance afterwards assembled at Sir Joshua Reynolds’ to hear his account of this conversation. Whilst its relation proceeded, Dr. Goldsmith sat on a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the eager curiosity of the company; and it was suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour which Johnson had lately enjoyed. “At length,” relates Boswell, “the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed; he sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, ‘Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.’”

In the course of this year, Johnson passed six months in the country. Probably part of them was passed at Oxford. Three, we are informed, were spent at Lichfield, where the following affecting and solemn interview took place. We relate it in Johnson’s own words:

“Sunday, Oct. 18, 1767. Yesterday, Oct. 17, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend, Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

"I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me, and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her.¹

"I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed, and parted. I humbly hope to meet again, and to part no more."

The following memoranda, of a little earlier date than the foregoing extract, are worthy of insertion here:

"August 2, 1767. I have been disturbed and unsettled for a long time; and have been without resolution to apply to study or to business, being hindered by sudden snatches.

"I have for some days forborne wine and suppers. Abstinence is not easily practised in another's house; but I think it fit to try.

"I was extremely perturbed in the night; but have had this day more ease than I expected. D[eo] gr[atia]. Perhaps this may be such a sudden relief as I once had by a good night's rest in Fetter Lane.

"From that time, by abstinence, I have had more ease. I have read five books of *Homer*, and hope to end the sixth to-night. I have given Mrs. —— a guinea.

"By abstinence from wine and suppers, I obtained sudden and great relief, and had freedom of mind restored to me; which I have wanted for all this year, without being able to find any means of obtaining it."

Boswell, having recently published his *Account of Corsica, &c.*, returned to London in the spring of 1768, with a view to discuss the subject of the work with his Mentor; and, ascertaining that he was at Oxford, he followed him thither. The ensuing are fragments of Johnson's conversation during their intercourse at the University:

"I asked him," says Boswell, "whether, as moralist, he did not think that the practice of the law in some degree

¹ The greater part of Johnson's prayer on this occasion is in the 'Office for the Visitation of the Sick,' in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

hurt the nice feeling of honesty." *Johnson*. "Why, no, sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion—you are not to tell lies to a judge." *Boswell*. "But what do you think of supporting a cause which you know to be bad?" *J.* "Sir, you do not know it to be good or bad till the judge determines it. I have said that you are to state facts fairly; so that your thinking, or what you call knowing, a cause to be bad, must be from reasoning—must be from your supposing your arguments to be weak and inconclusive. But, sir, that is not enough. An argument which does not convince yourself, may convince the judge to whom you argue it; and if it does convince him, why, then, sir, you are wrong, and he is right. It is his business to judge; and you are not to be confident in your own opinion that a cause is bad, but to say all you can for your client, and then hear the judge's opinion." *B.* "But, sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appearing to be clearly of one opinion when you are in reality of another opinion—does not such dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there not some danger that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life, in the intercourse with his friends?" *J.* "Why, no, sir. Every body knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client; and it is, therefore, properly, no dissimulation. The moment you come from the bar, you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands will continue to tumble upon his hands when he should walk on his feet."

He said he had been lately a long while at Lichfield, but had grown very weary before he left it. *Boswell*. "I wonder at that, sir; it is your native place." *Johnson*. "Why, so is Scotland *your* native place."

An Essay on the Future Life of Brute Creatures, by Richard Dean, curate of Middleton, was mentioned, and the doctrine insisted on by a gentleman who was fond of curious speculation. Johnson being offended with the discourse, watched an opportunity to give the speculatist "a blow of reprobation." So, when the latter, with a "serious, metaphysical, pensive face," addressed him, "But really, sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of

him," Johnson, rolling with joy at the thought which beamed in his eye, turned quickly round, and replied, "True, sir; and when we see a very foolish *fellow*, we don't know what to think of *him*." He then rose, strided to the fire, and stood for some time laughing and exulting.

Johnson remained some time at Oxford. In a letter written from thence (April 18th) to Miss Lucy Porter, he says: "To lose an old friend is to be cut off from a great part of the little pleasure that this life allows. But such is the condition of our nature, that as we live on, we must see those whom we love drop successively, and find our circle of relations grow less and less, till we are almost unconnected with the world; and then it must soon be our turn to drop into the grave. There is always this consolation, that we have one Protector who can never be lost but by our own fault; and every new experience of the uncertainty of all other comforts should determine us to fix our hearts where true joys are to be found. All union with the inhabitants of earth must in time be broken; and all the hopes that terminate here, must, on one part or other, end in disappointment."

So anxious was Johnson for the improvement of Francis Barber, his black servant, that he now placed him at a school at Bishop's Stortford, Herts. To Mr. Barnard, before mentioned, who was going on the continent to purchase books for the king's library, he (in an epistle dated May 28) gives this excellent advice:

" You are going into a part of the world divided, as it is said, between bigotry and atheism: such representations are always hyperbolical, but there is certainly enough of both to alarm any mind solicitous for piety and truth: let not the contempt of superstition precipitate you into infidelity, or the horror of infidelity ensnare you in superstition."

It does not appear that Johnson wrote any thing either for himself or his friends in 1769; and his *Meditations* prove that he suffered greatly this year in mind and body.¹ At this

¹ On his birthday, 1769, he writes: "This day completes the sixtieth year of my age. What I have done, and what I have left undone, the unsettled state of my mind makes all endeavours to think improper. I hope to survey my life with more tranquillity, in some part of the time which God shall grant me. The last year has been wholly spent in a slow progress of recovery. My days are easier, but the perturbation of my

period he was appointed Professor in Ancient Literature of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He passed part of the summer at Oxford and Lichfield, and in August visited Brighton in company with the Thrales. After his return to the metropolis he frequently met Boswell, who "continued the practice of making notes of his conversation" on these occasions. We proceed to enrich our pages with a few of the more interesting portions of it.

He said, he would not have Sunday kept with rigid severity and gloom, but with a gravity and simplicity of behaviour.¹ "Perfect good breeding," he observed, "consists in having no particular mark of any profession, but a general elegance of manners; whereas, in a military man, you can commonly distinguish the *brand* of a soldier, *l'homme d'épée*." He would not allow much merit to Whitfield's oratory. "His popularity, sir," said he, "is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a nightcap in the pulpit, or were he to preach from a tree." Talking of history, he remarked, "We may know historical facts to be true, as we may know facts in common life to be true. Motives are generally unknown. We cannot trust to the characters we find in history, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons; as those, for instance, by Sallust and by Lord Clarendon." He said, "The duration of Parliament, whether for seven years or the life of the king, appears to me so immaterial, that I would not give half-a-crown to turn the scale one way or the other. The *habeas corpus* is the single advantage which our government has over that of other countries." Talking of a London life, he remarked: "The happiness of London is not to be con-

nights is very distressful. I think to try a lower diet. I have grown fat too fast. My lungs seem incumbered, and my breath fails me, if my strength is in any unusual degree exerted, or my motion accelerated. I seem to myself to bear exercise with more difficulty than in the last winter. But though I feel all these decays of body, I have made no preparation for the grave. What shall I do to be saved?" A little later (Nov. 5), he prays: "ALMIGHTY GOD, merciful Father, whose Providence is over all Thy works, look down with pity upon the diseases of my body, and the perturbations of my mind. Give Thy blessing, O LORD, to the means which I shall use for my relief, and restore ease to my body, and quiet to my thoughts."

¹ The reader may remember an allegorical paper on this subject in the *Rambler*, which brings out Johnson's views in a very happy manner.

ceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." "When I censured," writes Boswell, "a gentleman of my acquaintance for marrying a second time, as it shewed a disregard of his first wife, Johnson said, 'Not at all, sir. On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage; but by taking a second wife, he pays the highest compliment to the first, by shewing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time.' So ingenious a turn did he give to this delicate question."

Johnson dined at Boswell's lodgings in Old Bond Street, on the 16th of October. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Murphy, and Davies, were of the party. Garrick, we are informed, played round him with a "fond vivacity," taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a "lively archness," complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. "One of the company," relates Boswell, "not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served; adding, 'Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?' 'Why, yes,' answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity, 'if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting.' Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress; and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. 'Come, come,' said Garrick, 'talk no more of that. You are, perhaps, the worst —eh, eh?' Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, 'Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of being well or *ill drest*.' 'Well, let me tell you,' said Goldsmith, 'when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said: Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow in Water Lane.' *Johnson.* 'Why, sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and

see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour.'"

After dinner the conversation turned upon poetry. Johnson said, that the description of the temple, in Congreve's *Mourning Bride*, viz.:

"How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and pond'rous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity!—It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight. The tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart!"

was the finest poetical passage he had ever read ; he recollects none in Shakespeare equal to it. "But," exclaimed Garrick, "we know not the extent and variety of his powers. We are to suppose there are such passages in his works ; Shakespeare must not suffer from the badness of our memories." Johnson, amused by his "enthusiastic jealousy," went on with great ardour : "No, sir; Congreve has *nature*;" but, composing himself, he added, "Sir, this is not comparing Congreve on the whole with Shakespeare on the whole, but only maintaining that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakespeare. Sir, a man may have no more than ten guineas in the world, but he may have those ten guineas in one piece ; and so may have a finer piece than a man who has ten thousand pounds ; but then he has only one ten-guinea piece. What I mean is, that you can shew me no passage where there is simply a description of material objects, without any intermixture of moral notions, which produces such an effect." Murphy mentioned Shakespeare's description of the night before the battle of Agincourt ; but it was observed it had *men* in it. Some one alluded to the description of Dover Cliff. *Johnson*. "No, sir; it should be all precipice—all vacuum. The crows impede your fall. The diminished appearance of the boats, and other circumstances, are all very good description, but do not impress the mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on by computation from one stage of the tremendous space to another. Had the girl in the *Mourning Bride* said, she could not cast her shoe to the top of one of the pillars

in the temple, it would not have aided the idea, but weakened it."

Politics being mentioned, he said, "This petitioning is a new mode of distressing government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter-guineas or half-guineas, with the help of a little hot wine. There must be no yielding to encourage this. The object is not important enough. We are not to blow up half a dozen palaces because one cottage is burning."

Johnson and Boswell spent the evening of Thursday, October the 19th, together, and the following conversation took place. In allusion to our feeling for the distresses of others, Johnson remarked, "Why, sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good; more than that Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose." *Boswell.* "But suppose now, sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged." *Johnson.* "I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer."¹ *B.* "Would you eat your dinner that day, sir?" *J.* "Yes, sir; and eat it as if he were dining with me. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind." Notwithstanding the above assertion, nobody suffered more from pungent sorrow at a friend's decease than Johnson, though he would allow no one to complain of their losses in the same way. "For," said he, "we must either outlive our friends, you know, or our friends must outlive us; and I see no man that would hesitate about the choice."

Next day he appeared, for the only time in his life, as a witness in a court of justice, being summoned to give evi-

¹ Mrs. Piozzi observes: "While Dr. Johnson possessed the strongest compassion for poverty or illness, he did not even pretend to feel for those who lamented the loss of a child, a parent, or a friend." "These are the distresses of sentiment," he would reply, "which a man who is really to be pitied has no leisure to feel. The sight of people who want food and raiment is so common in great cities, that a surly fellow like me has no compassion to spare for wounds given only to vanity or softness." An acquaintance lost the almost certain hope of a good estate that had been long expected. "Such a one will grieve," said I, "at her friend's disappointment." "She will suffer as much, perhaps," said he, "as your horse did when your cow miscarried."

dence to the character of Mr. Baretti, who, having stabbed a man in self-defence,¹ in the street, was arraigned at the Old Bailey for murder. Burke, Garrick, Beauclerk, Johnson, and others, gave evidence in his favour; and, undoubtedly, their testimony had due weight with the court and jury. Johnson gave his in a slow, deliberate, and distinct manner, which was uncommonly impressive. Baretti was acquitted.

A few days after this event Boswell took tea with Johnson. "Mrs. Williams," he observes, "made it with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness.² . . . In my first elation at being allowed the privilege of attending Dr. Johnson at his late visits to this lady, which was like being *& secretioribus consiliis*, I willingly drank cup after cup, as if it had been the Heliconian spring. But as the charm of novelty went off, I grew more fastidious; and, besides, I discovered that she was of a peevish temper." On this evening Johnson was lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects. Some one told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses—a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. "Then, sir," said the facetious philosopher, "what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too." To a remark of Boswell's, that he laughed at schemes of political improvement, he replied, "Why, sir, most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things."

He observed, "Providence has wisely ordered that the more numerous men are, the more difficult it is for them to agree in any thing, and so they are governed. There is no doubt that, if the poor should reason, 'We'll be the poor no longer; we'll make the rich take their turn,' they could easily do it, were it not that they can't agree. So the common

¹ Baretti was accosted in the Haymarket by a woman, whom he repulsed with a degree of rudeness which was resented by her male confederates; and, in the scuffle, he struck one of them with a French pocket dessert-knife. On this the man pursued and collared him, when Baretti, still more alarmed, stabbed him repeatedly with the knife, and wounded him so severely that he died on the following day. Baretti was immediately taken into custody, and tried for murder at the Old Bailey, as stated in the text.

² "Being extremely clean and neat in her person and habits, she never gave the least disgust by her manner of eating; and, when she made tea for Johnson and his friends, conducted it with so much delicacy, by gently touching the outside of the cup to feel, by the heat, the tea as it ascended within, that it was rather matter of admiration than of dislike to every attentive observer." *Bishop Percy.*

soldiers, though so much more numerous than their officers, are governed by them for the same reason." The subject of Romanism having been introduced, Boswell remarked, "So, sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholic religion." *Johnson.* "No more, sir, than to the Presbyterian religion." *Boswell.* "You are joking." *J.* "No, sir, I really think so. Nay, sir, of the two I prefer the Popish." *B.* "How so, sir?" *J.* "Why, sir, the Presbyterians have no church, no apostolical ordination." *B.* "And do you think that absolutely essential, sir?" *J.* "Why, sir, as it was an apostolical institution, I think it is dangerous to be without it. And, sir, the Presbyterians have no public worship. They have no form of prayer in which they know they are to join. They go to hear a man pray, and are to judge whether they will join with him." *B.* "But, sir, their doctrine is the same with that of the Church of England. Their confession of faith and the thirty-nine articles contain the same points, even the doctrine of predestination." *J.* "Why, yes, sir, predestination was a part of the clamour of the times, so it is mentioned in our articles, but with as little positiveness as could be."

Boswell inquired, "What do you think, sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?" *Johnson.* "Why, sir, it is a very harmless doctrine." *Boswell.* "But then, sir, their masses for the dead?" *J.* "Why, sir, if it is once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for *them* as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life." *B.* "The idolatry of the mass?" *J.* "Sir, there is no idolatry in the mass. They believe GOD to be there, and they adore Him." *B.* "The worship of the saints?" *J.* "Sir, they do not worship saints; they invoke them; they only ask their prayers. I am talking all this time of the *doctrines* of the Church of Rome. I grant you that, in practice, purgatory is made a lucrative imposition; and that the people do become idolatrous, as they recommend themselves to the tutelary protection of particular saints. I think their giving the sacrament only in one kind is criminal, because it is contrary to the express institution of CHRIST, and I wonder how the Council of Trent admitted it." *B.* "Confession?" *J.* "Why, I don't know but that it is a good thing. The Scripture says, 'Confess your faults one to another'; and the priests

confess as well as the laity. Then it must be considered that their absolution is only upon repentance, and often upon penance also. You think your sins may be forgiven without penance, upon repentance alone."

Towards the close of the evening, Boswell asked his companion, "May we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?" Angry at having brought before his view what he ever beheld with horror, Johnson answered warmly, "No, sir, let it alone; it matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time." He added, with an earnest look, "A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine." "I attempted," says Boswell, "to continue the conversation. He was so provoked, that he said, 'Give us no more of this;' and was thrown into such a state of agitation, that he expressed himself in a way that alarmed and distressed me; shewed an impatience that I should leave him, and when I was going away called to me sternly, 'Don't let us meet to-morrow.'" The poor offender went home exceedingly uneasy, fancying himself "like the man who had put his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with perfect safety, but at last had it bit off." Next morning he sent Johnson a note of a pacific nature, and stating that, notwithstanding the great man's prohibition, he would call on him on his way to the city, and stay five minutes by his watch; adding, "You are in my mind since last night, surrounded with cloud and storm; let me have a glimpse of sunshine, and go about my affairs in serenity and cheerfulness." Upon entering the lion's den, Boswell was received by its occupant "very complacently." Two other gentlemen were present. When Boswell was going to leave, and had got as far as the staircase, Johnson stopped him, and smiling said, "Get you gone *in*;" whereupon he stayed a little longer. "This little incidental quarrel and reconciliation," says the junior partner in it, "must be esteemed as one of many proofs which his friends had that, though he might be charged with bad *humour* at times, he was always a *good-natured* man."¹

¹ Sir Joshua Reynolds, "a nice and delicate observer of manners," remarked in the hearing of Boswell, "that when upon any occasion Johnson had been rough to any person in company, he took the first opportunity of reconciliation, by drinking to him, or addressing his discourse to

Boswell being to set out for his native country on the 10th of November, with the intention of entering upon the estate of matrimony, early in the morning of the above day paid a visit to Johnson at Streatham. The Doctor condescended to return with him to town, and "see him into the post-chaise which was to carry him on his road to Scotland."

him ; but if he found his dignified indirect overtures sullenly neglected, he was quite indifferent, and considered himself as having done all that he ought to do, and the other as now in the wrong."



CHAPTER VI.

Johnson publishes the *False Alarm*. Mr. Wilkes. Johnson suffers from rheumatism. Visits Lichfield and Ashbourne. Publishes *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting the Falkland Islands*. Mr. Thrale endeavours unsuccessfully to get him into Parliament. Johnson goes into Staffordshire and Derbyshire. His cat, Hodge. Popular election of the Clergy. Subscription to the Articles. The future state. Purgatory. Public amusements. Bishops in Parliament. Inequality of Clerical livings. Duelling. Methodists. Learning to read. Extracts from Johnson's *Meditations*. Drinking. Fleas. Lord Mansfield. Authors' mss. Johnson visits Lichfield and Ashbourne. Masquerades. Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney. Inequality and subordination. Boswell elected a member of the Literary Club. Lay patrons. Toleration. Johnson rebukes Goldsmith for impertinence. Toleration of Socinian preachers. Johnson's astonishing fit of laughter.

IN 1770 Johnson published a political pamphlet, entitled the *False Alarm*, intended to justify the conduct of the ministry and their majority in the House of Commons, for having assumed "that the expulsion of a member of parliament was equivalent to exclusion, and thus having declared Colonel Luttrell to be duly elected for Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr. Wilkes¹ had a great majority of votes." This being con-

¹ John Wilkes, Alderman and Lord Mayor of London, was born in the metropolis in 1727. He received a liberal education; and, after travelling on the continent, married a lady of fortune, and became colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia. In 1761 he was elected M.P. for Aylesbury; but on his publishing an offensive libel in No. 45 of his journal, the *North Briton*, a general warrant was issued by the secretary of state to seize him and his papers; and he was committed to the Tower. In a few days after, however, he was brought, by writ of *habeas corpus*, before the Chief-Justice Pratt, of the Common Pleas, who declared that general warrants were illegal; and he was consequently discharged, amidst the rejoicings of the populace. Wilkes soon incurred another prosecution, for printing an indelicate poem, called an *Essay on Woman*; and, for not appearing to receive judgment, was outlawed. He then went to France, where he resided till 1768, when he was elected for Middlesex; but was prevented from taking his seat, and committed to the King's Bench prison. This occasioned dreadful riots in St. George's Fields. He had now attained the height of his popularity; and a large subscription was made to pay his

sidered as a gross violation of the right of election, an alarm for the constitution extended itself over the kingdom. To prove this alarm to be groundless was the purpose of Johnson's production. "But even," says Boswell, "his vast powers were incompetent to cope with constitutional truth and reason, and his argument failed of effect, and the House of Commons have since expunged the offensive resolution from their journals." This, his first and favourite pamphlet, was written at Mr. Thrale's, between eight o'clock on Wednesday night and twelve on the night following. It was published by T. Cadell on January 16th; a second edition appeared on February 6th, and a third on March 13th. Johnson suffered soon after, for many weeks, from a "tedious and painful rheumatism," but was able to make an excursion to Lichfield, and the matrimonial residence of his school-fellow, Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourne. The next year he put forth another political tract, entitled *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting the Falkland Islands*; in which, "upon materials furnished to him by the ministry, and upon general topics, expanded in his rich style, he successfully endeavoured to persuade the nation that it was wise and laudable to suffer the question of right to remain undecided, rather than involve our country in another war." This pamphlet has been characterised as containing a description of the miseries of war which is one of the finest pieces of eloquence in the English language. He lashes the party in opposition with unbounded severity. His character of their champion, Junius, "is executed," says Boswell, "with all the force of his genius, and finished with the highest care. He seems to have exulted in sallying forth in single combat against the boasted and formidable hero, who bade defiance to 'principalities and powers, and the rulers of this world.'"

The publication of this tract and its predecessor exhibited Johnson to the world in a new character. "He ceased now," observes Hawkins, "to be considered as one who, having been more conversant with books than with men, knew little of active life, the views of parties, or the artifices of designing men; on the contrary, they discovered that he had, by the

debts. In 1774, the year of his mayoralty, he was again elected for Middlesex, and permitted to take his seat without further opposition. He died in 1797.

force of his own genius, and the observations he had made on the history of our own and other countries, attained to such skill in the grand leading principles of political science as is seldom acquired by those in the most active and important stations, even after long experience ; and that, whatever opinions he might have formed on this subject, he had ability, by strong reasoning, to defend, and by a manly and convincing eloquence to enforce." Mr. Thrale quickly discerned these abilities in his friend ; and, believing that their exercise might redound to the benefit of the public, entertained a design of bringing him into Parliament, and had two interviews with the Minister on the subject. Mr. Strahan, the printer, who was accustomed to receive Johnson's pension for him and act as his banker, also wrote to one of the secretaries of state on the same topic. The project failed—why, can only be conjectured. "I never," remarks Boswell, "heard him [Johnson] mention the subject; but, at a later period of his life, when Sir Joshua Reynolds told him that Mr. Edmund Burke had said, that if he had come early into Parliament, he certainly would have been the greatest speaker¹ that ever was there, Johnson exclaimed, 'I should like to try my hand now.'"

In April 1771, Boswell renewed his correspondence with the philosopher, and gave him an account of his comfortable life as a married man, and a lawyer in practice at the Scotch bar. Johnson replied on the 20th of June : "My dear sir, mind your studies, mind your business, make your lady happy, and be a good Christian. . . . I am this day going into Staffordshire and Derbyshire for six weeks."

On the 22d of June, he wrote to Mrs. Thrale from Lichfield, and informed her that Miss Porter's "dog and cats are all well." Johnson had a strong aversion to four-footed companions, notwithstanding he had for many years a favourite cat, which he called Hodge, that he kept always in his room at Fleet Street ; but so particular was he not to offend the human species by superfluous attention to brutes, that when the creature was grown sick and old, and could eat nothing

¹ It may be questioned whether Johnson, having been so long accustomed to sententious brevity, and the short flights of conversation, might not have failed in that continued and expanded kind of argument which is requisite in stating complicated matters in public speaking.

but oysters, Johnson always went out himself to buy Hodge's dinner, that Francis the black's delicacy might not be hurt at seeing himself employed for the convenience of a quadruped.

His next epistle to Mrs. Thrale is dated "Ashbourne, July 7." It is as follows :

"Poor Dr. Taylor is ill, and under my government: you know that the art of government is learned by obedience; I hope I can govern very tolerably. The old rheumatism is come again into my face and mouth, but nothing yet to the lumbago; however, having so long thought it gone, I do not like its return. Miss Porter was much pleased to be mentioned in your letter, and is sure that I have spoken better of her than she deserved. She holds that both Frank and his master are much improved. The master, she says, is not half so *lounging* and *untidy* as he was; there was no such thing last year as getting him off his chair."

The next day he apprised the above lady of the convalescence of his friend and himself. On the 29th of August he writes to Mr. Langton, "My summer wanderings are now over, and I am engaging in a very great work, the revision of my Dictionary; from which I know not, at present, how to get loose." About this time he became personally acquainted with Dr. Beattie, who came to him from Edinburgh, with a letter of introduction from Boswell. From his *Meditations* of this year we learn that he was better than usual both in body and mind, and better satisfied with the regularity of his conduct. He condemns himself for not rising early enough, —a good habit, of which, there is reason to believe, he was physically incapable.¹

¹ He writes on his sixty-third birthday (Sept. 18, 1771): "For the last year I have been slowly recovering, both from the violence of my last illness, and, I think, from the general disease of my life. My breath is less obstructed, and I am more capable of motion and exercise. My mind is less encumbered, and I am less interrupted in mental employment. Some advances, I hope, have been made towards regularity. I have missed church since Easter only two Sundays, both which I hope I have endeavoured to supply by attendance on divine worship in the following week. Since Easter my evening devotions have been lengthened. But indolence and indifference has been neither conquered nor opposed. No plan of study has been pursued or formed, except that I have commonly read every week, if not on Sunday, a stated portion of the New Testament in Greek. But what is most to be considered, I have neither attempted nor formed any

He published nothing in 1772. Boswell visited London on professional business early in the year, and went without delay to pay his *devoirs* to the sage at his residence. On this occasion Johnson remarked, “I cannot wish well to a popular election of the clergy, when I consider that it occasions such animosities, such unworthy courting of the people, such slanders between the contending parties, and other disadvantages. It is enough to allow the people to remonstrate against the nomination of a minister for solid reasons,” *i. e.* heresy or immorality.

During an interview with Johnson on the night of March 27, Boswell, finding him in a very good humour, ventured to lead him to the subject of our situation in a future state; saying, “One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again.” *J.* “Yes, sir; but you must consider that, when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures; all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men, because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us; but after death they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are: after death we shall see every one in a true light. Then, sir, they talk of our meeting our relations: but then all relationship is dissolved; and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them.” *B.* “Yet, sir, we see in Scripture that Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren.” *J.* “Why, sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold, with many divines and all the purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the utmost perfection of which they are capable.” *B.* “I think, sir, that is a very rational supposition.” *J.* “Why yes, sir; but we do not know it is a true one. There is no harm in believing it: but

scheme of life by which I may do good, and please God. One great hindrance is want of rest; my nocturnal complaints grow less troublesome towards morning; and I am tempted to repair the deficiencies of the night. I think, however, to try to rise every day by eight, and to combat indolence as I shall obtain strength. Perhaps Providence has yet some use for the remnant of my life.”

you must not compel others to make it an article of faith : it is not revealed." *B.* "Do you think, sir, it is wrong in a man who holds the doctrine of purgatory to pray for the souls of his deceased friends?" *J.* "Why no, sir." . . . *B.* "As to our employment in a future state, the sacred writings say little. The Revelation, however, of St. John gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music." *J.* "Why, sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know ; and as to music, there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained that we shall not be spiritualised to such a degree, but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain. In that case, music may make a part of our future felicity."

Four days after this conversation, Johnson told Sir Adam Ferguson, to whom he was casually introduced by Boswell at the Pantheon,¹ that he was "a great friend to public amusements ; for they keep people from vice." Sir Adam having suggested a doubt of the propriety of bishops having seats in the House of Lords, Johnson said, "How so, sir? Who is more proper for having the dignity of a peer than a bishop, provided a bishop be what he ought to be? and if improper bishops be made, that is not the fault of the bishops, but of those who make them."

On the following Sunday, Boswell alluded to the inequality of the livings of the clergy in England, and the scanty provisions of some of the curates. "Why yes, sir," was the reply ; "but it cannot be helped. You must consider, that the revenues of the clergy are not at the disposal of the state, like the pay of an army. Different men have founded different churches ; and some are better endowed, some worse.² The state cannot interfere and make an equal division of what has been particularly appropriated. Now when a clergyman has but a small living, or even two small livings, he can afford very little to the curate." He remarked at the same time, that he went more frequently to church when there were prayers only than when there was also a sermon, as the people required more an example for one than the

¹ The Pantheon in Oxford Street is the successor of the building above mentioned. That was built in 1772, and subsequently burned down.

² It has been well observed that Johnson might have added, "That sometimes the worse endowed are so, because they have been *robbed* ; the better endowed are so, because they have been *spared*."

other; it being much easier for them to hear a sermon than to fix their minds on prayer.

Boswell dined with Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith at General Oglethorpe's on the following Friday. Duelling was mentioned; and the General told them, that when he was only fifteen, serving under Prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a Prince of Wirtemberg. The prince took up a glass of wine, and by a fillip made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma. To have challenged him instantly might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier: to have taken no notice of it might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe, therefore, keeping his eye upon the prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his highness had done in jest, said, "That's a good joke; but we do it much better in England;" and threw a whole glass of wine in the prince's face. An old officer, who sat by, said, "He has done well, my prince, you began it:" and thus all ended in good humour.

On April 15th, when at supper with Johnson at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, Boswell mentioned the expulsion of six students from Oxford who were Methodists, and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting. Johnson said, "Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an university who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows." *B.* "But was it not hard, sir, to expel them; for I am told they were good beings?" *J.* "I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden." Langton, who was present, observed that he was about to establish a school upon his estate; but it had been suggested to him, that it might have a tendency to make the people less industrious. *J.* "No, sir; while learning to read and write is a distinction, the few who have that distinction may be the less inclined to work; but when everybody learns to read and write, it is no longer a distinction. A man who has a laced waistcoat is too fine a man to work; but if every body had laced waistcoats, we should have people working in laced waistcoats. There are no people whatever more industrious, none who

work more, than our manufacturers, yet they have all learnt to read and write. Sir, you must not neglect doing a thing immediately good from fear of remote evil, from fear of its being abused."

At this season (it being Passion-week), Johnson was more than usually diligent in religious duties, particularly in reading the Holy Scriptures. Boswell "paid him short visits both on Friday and Saturday; and seeing his large folio Greek Testament before him, beheld him with a reverential awe, and would not intrude upon his time." How the Easter-day of this year was spent by the Christian philosopher shall be told in his own words :

"I went to church early, having first, I think, used my prayer. When I was there, I had very little perturbation of mind. During the usual time of meditation, I considered the Christian duties under the three principles of soberness, righteousness, and godliness ; and proposed to forward godliness by the *annual perusal of the Bible* ; righteousness *by setting something for charity*, and soberness *by early hours*. I commended as usual, with preface of permission, and, I think, mentioned Bathurst. . . . What devotions I used after my return home, I do not distinctly remember. I went to prayers in the evening ; and, I think, entered late."

He adds :

"It is a comfort to me, that at last, in my sixty-third year, I have attained to know, even thus hastily, confusedly, and imperfectly, what my Bible contains."

Two or three more of Johnson's sayings to Boswell during his stay in London in the spring of this year deserve mention.

A gentleman having to some of the usual arguments for drinking added this : " You know, sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would you not allow a man to drink for that reason ?" J. " Yes, sir, if he sat next *you*."

Another gentleman, who, in the course of conversation, wished to state the simple fact that the counsel of —, upon the circuit of Shrewsbury, were much bitten by fleas, took, perhaps, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. Johnson sat in great impatience till the tedious narrative was concluded ; and then burst out (playfully, however), " It is a

pity, sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you for a twelvemonth."

He would not allow Scotland to derive any credit from Lord Mansfield; for he was educated in England. "Much," said he, "may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young."

He said, "I am very unwilling to read the manuscripts of authors, and give them my opinion. If the authors who apply to me have money, I bid them boldly print without a name; if they have written in order to get money, I tell them to go to the booksellers, and make the best bargain they can." *Boswell.* "But, sir, if a bookseller should bring you a manuscript to look at?" *J.* "Why, sir, I would desir'd the bookseller to take it away."

In the autumn of 1772, Johnson visited Lichfield and Ashbourne, where, as appears from his letters to Mrs. Thrale, he was considerably indisposed.

A communication which he addressed to Boswell on "Feb. 22, 1773," contains the following remarks :

"I have heard of your masquerade. What says your Synod to such innovations? I am not studiously scrupulous,¹ nor do I think a masquerade either evil in itself, or very likely to be an occasion of evil; yet, as the world thinks it a very licentious relaxation of manners, I would not have been one of the *first* masquers in a country where no masquerade had ever been before.²

¹ The greatest moralist of the age was no precisian. "Cards, dress, and dancing," says Mrs. Piozzi, "all found their advocates in Dr. Johnson; who inculcated, upon principle, the cultivation of those arts, which many a moralist thinks himself bound to reject, and many a Christian holds unfit to be practised." "No person," said he one day, "goes under-dressed till he thinks himself of consequence enough to forbear carrying the badge of his rank upon his back." And in answer to the arguments urged by Puritans, Quakers, &c. against showy decorations of the human figure, he once exclaimed, "Oh, let us not be found, when our Master calls us, ripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues! Let us all conform in outward customs, which are of no consequence, to the manners of those whom we live among, and despise such paltry distinctions. Alas, sir," continued he, "a man who cannot get to heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither the sooner in a grey one."

² There had been such entertainments in Scotland; but not for a very long period. This one was given on the 15th of January by the Dowager Countess of Fife. Boswell appeared in the character of a dumb conjuror.

"A new edition of my great (folio) Dictionary is printed, from a copy which I was persuaded to revise; but having made no preparation, I was able to do very little. Some superfluities I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark; but the main fabric of the work remains as it was. I had looked very little into it since I wrote it; and, I think, I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected."

"My health seems in general to improve; but I have been troubled for many weeks with a vexatious catarrh, which is sometimes sufficiently distressful. I have not found any great effects from bleeding and physic; and am afraid that I must expect help from brighter days and softer air."

Boswell arrived in London on the 3d of April, and late in the evening of the following day was welcomed by his distinguished friend. He mentioned Sir John Dalrymple's *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*, and his discoveries to the prejudice of Lord Russell and Algernon Sydney. "Why, sir," replied Johnson, "every body who had just notions of government thought them rascals before. It is well that all mankind now see them to be rascals." "But, sir," said Boswell, "may not these discoveries be true without their being rascals?" *Johnson*. "Consider, sir; would any of them have been willing to have it known that they intrigued with France? Depend upon it, sir, he who does what he is afraid should be known has something rotten about him."

On the 9th, being Good Friday, Johnson and Boswell went to the church of St. Clement Danes, where the former had a seat. "His behaviour," says his companion, "was, as I had imagined to myself, solemnly devout. I never shall forget the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the litany: 'In the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, good LORD deliver us.'" "We went to church," he adds, "both in the morning and evening. In the interval between the two services we did not dine; but he read in the Greek New Testament, and I turned over several of his books." To his great surprise, Boswell was invited to dine with the lexicographer at his residence, on Easter-day. He supposed that there would scarcely be knives and forks, and only "some strange, uncouth, ill-drest dish;" but he found every thing in good order. "We had," he says,

"very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal pie, and a rice pudding." He does not record whether the last viand but one had the singular addition of plums and sugar; ingredients which (according to Mrs. Piozzi) greatly improved the flavour of a veal pie in Dr. Johnson's opinion.

Four days afterwards, Johnson, Boswell, and Goldsmith dined at General Oglethorpe's. On being told that Mrs. Macauley said she wondered how he could reconcile his political principles with his moral; his notions of inequality and subordination with wishing well to the happiness of all mankind, &c., Johnson observed, "Why, sir, I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. Were they to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes. They would become Monboddo's nation, their tails would grow.¹ Sir, all would be losers, were all to work for all: they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improvement arises from leisure; all leisure arises from one working for another."

On Friday, April the 30th, Boswell was elected a member of the Literary Club, and saw Edmund Burke for the first time. Upon his entrance to the place of meeting, Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave him a *charge*, pointing out the conduct expected from him as a good member of the society.

At Mrs. Williams's tea-table, on the first of May, Boswell introduced the question whether the claim of lay-patrons to present ministers to parishes be well founded; and supposing it to be well founded, whether it ought to be exercised without the concurrence of the people. In relation to this subject Johnson's opinion, dictated to his friend at the time, shall be stated, though at the risk of being tedious:

"Against the right of patrons," says he, "is commonly opposed the plea of *conscience*. Conscience tells them, that the people ought to choose their pastor; conscience tells them, that a minister ungrateful and unacceptable to his auditors ought not to be imposed upon a congregation. Con-

¹ Lord Monboddo (of whom we shall have occasion to say more hereafter) held [the strange notion, that men had originally been similar to monkeys, but that their tails had gradually worn off.

science is nothing more than a conviction felt by ourselves of something to be done, or something to be avoided; and, in questions of simple morality, conscience is very often a guide that may be trusted. But before conscience can determine, the state of the question is supposed to be completely known. In questions of law or fact, conscience is very often confounded with opinion. No man's *conscience* can tell him the *right* of another man; that must be known by rational investigation, or historical inquiry. Opinion—which he that holds it may call his conscience—may teach some men that religion would be promoted, and quiet preserved, by granting to the people, universally, the choice of their ministers. But it is a conscience very ill informed, that violates the rights of one man for the convenience of another. Religion cannot be promoted by injustice; and it was never yet found that a popular election was very quietly transacted. That justice would be violated by transferring to the people the right of patronage (to livings), is apparent to all that know whence that right had its original. The right of patronage was not at first a privilege torn by power from unresisting poverty; it is not an authority at first usurped in times of ignorance, and established only by succession and precedents; it is not a grant capriciously made from a higher tyrant to a lower; it is a right dearly purchased by the first possessors, and justly inherited by them that succeeded them. When Christianity was established in this island, a regular mode of public worship was prescribed. Public worship requires a public place; and the proprietors of lands, as they were converted, built churches for their families and their vassals. For the maintenance of ministers, they settled a certain portion of their lands; and a district, through which each minister was required to extend his care, was, by that circumscription, constituted a parish. This is a position so generally received in England, that the extent of a manor and of a parish are regularly received for each other. The churches which the proprietors of lands had thus built and thus endowed, they justly thought themselves entitled to provide with ministers; and where the episcopal government prevails, the bishop has no power to reject a man nominated by the patron, but for some crime that might exclude him from the priesthood: for the endowment of the church being the gift of the landlord,

he was consequently at liberty to give it, according to his choice, to any man capable of performing the holy offices. The people did not choose him, because the people did not pay him. We hear it sometimes urged, that this original right has passed out of memory, and is obliterated and obscured by many translations of property and changes of government; that scarce any church is now in the hands of the heirs of the builders; and that the present persons have entered subsequently upon the pretended rights by a thousand accidental and unknown causes. Much of this, perhaps, is true. But how is the right of patronage extinguished? If the right followed the lands, it is possessed by the same equity by which the lands are possessed. It is, in effect, part of the manor, and protected by the same laws with every other privilege. Let us suppose an estate forfeited by treason, and granted by the crown to a new family. With the lands were forfeited all the rights appendant to those lands; by the same power that grants the lands, the rights also are granted. The right lost to the patron falls not to the people, but is either retained by the crown, or, what to the people is the same thing, is by the crown given away. Let it change hands ever so often, it is possessed by him that receives it with the same right as it was conveyed. It may, indeed, like all our possessions, be forcibly seized, or fraudulently obtained; but no injury is still done to the people; for what they never had, they have never lost. Caius may usurp the right of Titius, but neither Caius nor Titius injure the people; and no man's conscience, however tender or however active, can prompt him to restore what may be proved to have been never taken away. Supposing,—what I think cannot be proved,—that a popular election of ministers were to be desired, our desires are not the measures of equity. It were to be desired that power should be only in the hands of the merciful, and riches in the possession of the generous; but the law must leave both riches and power where it finds them; and must often leave riches with the covetous, and power with the cruel. Convenience may be a rule in little things, where no other rule has been established; but as the great end of government is to give every man his own, no inconvenience is greater than that of making right uncertain. Nor is any man more an enemy to public peace than he who

fills weak heads with imaginary claims, and breaks the series of civil subordination by inciting the lower classes of mankind to encroach upon the higher."

The best excuses for the length at which Johnson's opinion respecting the patronage of livings has been stated, must be, the value of his masterly arguments, and the interest still taken in the subject in question. And these excuses may serve for bringing forward his ideas expressed on the same occasion respecting a kindred subject, the *expediency* (supposing it could be done with *justice* to the rights of patrons) of the ministers in each parish being popularly elected. "Let us consider," says Johnson, "what the people would really gain by a general abolition of the rights of patronage. What is most to be desired by such a change is, that the country should be supplied with better ministers. But why should we suppose that the parish will make a wiser choice than the patron? If we suppose mankind actuated by interest, the patron is more likely to choose with caution, because he will suffer more by choosing wrong. By the deficiencies of his minister, or by his vices, he is equally offended with the rest of the congregation; but he will have this reason more to lament them, that they will be imputed to his absurdity or corruption. The qualifications of a minister are well known to be learning and piety. Of his learning the patron is probably the only judge in the parish; and of his piety not less a judge than others; and is more likely to inquire minutely and diligently before he gives a *presentation*, than one of the parochial rabble, who can give nothing but a *vote*. It may be urged that, though the parish might not choose better ministers, they would at least choose ministers whom they like better, and who would therefore officiate with greater efficacy. That ignorance and perverseness should always obtain what they like was never considered as the end of government, of which it is the great and standing benefit that the wise see for the simple, and the regular act for the capricious. But that this argument supposes the people capable of judging, and resolute to act according to their better judgment—though this be sufficiently absurd—is not all its absurdity. It supposes not only wisdom, but unanimity, in those who, upon no other occasions, are unanimous and wise. If, by

some strange occurrence, all the voices of a parish should unite in the choice of any single man, though I could not charge the patron with *injustice* in presenting another minister, I should censure him as unkind and injudicious. But it is evident that, as in all other popular elections, there will be a contrariety of judgment and acrimony of passion : a parish, upon every vacancy, would break into factions ; and the contest for the choice of a minister would set neighbours at variance, and bring discord into families. The minister would be taught all the arts of a candidate, would flatter some, and bribe others ; and the electors, as in all other cases, would call for holidays and ale, and break the heads of each other during the jollity of the canvass. The time must, however, come at last when one of the factions must prevail, and one of the ministers get possession of the church. On what terms does he enter upon his ministry, but those of enmity with half his parish ? By what prudence, or what diligence, can he hope to conciliate the affections of that party by whose defeat he has obtained his living ? Of a minister presented by the patron, the parish has seldom any thing worse to say than that they do not know him : of a minister chosen by a popular contest, all those who do not favour him have nursed up in their bosoms principles of hatred and reasons of rejection."

Messrs. Edward and Charles Dilly, booksellers in the Poultry, had the honour of entertaining Johnson at dinner on the 8th of May. Among the guests were Boswell, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Toplady the well-known Calvinist, Mr. Langton, and Dr. Mayo a dissenting preacher. At this party the following conversation took place on the subject of toleration.

Johnson. "Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency. To say the *magistrate* has this right, is using an inadequate word,—it is the *society* for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right."

Mayo. "I am of opinion, sir, that every man has a right to liberty of conscience in religion, and that the magistrate cannot restrain that right."

J. "Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to

liberty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with liberty of talking, nay with liberty of preaching. Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases ; for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not a moral right ; for he ought to inform himself, and think justly. But, sir, no member of a society has a right to *teach* any doctrine contrary to what the society holds to be true. The magistrate, I say, may be wrong in what he thinks ; but while he thinks himself right, he may and ought to enforce what he thinks.” *Mayo.* “Then, sir, we are to remain always in error, and truth never can prevail ; and the magistrate was right in persecuting the first Christians.” *Johnson.* “Sir, the only method by which religious truth can be established is by martyrdom. The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks, and he who is conscious of the truth has a right to suffer. I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth, but by persecution on the one hand, and enduring it on the other.”

During this argument, which branched off into several lengthy ramifications which we have thought fit to cut off, “Goldsmith,” relates Boswell, “sat in restless agitation, from a wish to get in and *shine*. Finding himself excluded, he had taken his hat to go away ; but remained for some time with it in his hand, like a gamester who, at the close of a long night, lingers for a little while, to see if he can have a favourable opening to finish with success. Once, when he was beginning to speak, he found himself overpowered by the loud voice of Johnson, who was at the opposite end of the table, and did not perceive Goldsmith’s attempt. Thus disappointed of his wish to obtain the attention of the company, Goldsmith in a passion threw down his hat, looking angrily at Johnson, and exclaiming in a bitter tone, ‘*Take it.*’ When Toplady was going to speak, Johnson uttered some sound, which led Goldsmith to think that he was beginning again, and taking the words from Toplady. Upon which he seized this opportunity of venting his own envy and spleen, under the pretext of supporting another person : ‘Sir,’ said he to Johnson, ‘the gentleman has heard you patiently for an hour : pray allow us now to hear him.’ *Johnson* (sternly). ‘Sir, I was not interrupting the gentleman. I was only giv-

ing him a signal of my attention. Sir, you are impertinent.' Goldsmith made no reply, but continued in the company for some time." Mr. Langton inquired of Johnson, whether it would be wrong to tolerate those who preach against the doctrine of the TRINITY? The latter was highly offended; and said, "I wonder, sir, how a gentleman of your piety can introduce this subject in a mixed company." Langton, "with submissive deference," replied, that he only hinted at the question from a desire to hear Dr. Johnson's opinion upon it. "Why, then, sir," answered the Doctor, "I think that permitting men to preach any opinion contrary to the doctrine of the Established Church tends, in a certain degree, to lessen the authority of the Church, and, consequently, to lessen the influence of religion." Ireland being mentioned, Johnson indignantly exclaimed, "The Irish are in a most unnatural state; for we see there the minority prevailing over the majority. There is no instance, even in the ten persecutions, of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland have exercised against the [Roman] Catholics. Did we tell them we have conquered them, it would be above board; to punish them by confiscation and other penalties, as rebels, was monstrous injustice. King William was not their lawful sovereign; he had not been acknowledged by the Parliament of Ireland when they appeared in arms against him."

Johnson, Langton, and Boswell left Dilly's for the Club; where they found Goldsmith, who sat silently brooding over Johnson's reprimand to him at dinner. The sage perceiving this, said aside, "I'll make Goldsmith forgive me;" and then called to him in a loud voice, "Dr. Goldsmith, something passed to-day where you and I dined: I ask your pardon." Goldsmith answered mildly, "It must be much from you, sir, that I take ill." "And so," says Boswell, "at once the difference was over, and Goldsmith rattled away as usual."

On May 9th, the day before that fixed upon for Boswell's departure for Scotland, Johnson supped with his future biographer at the chambers of a common friend in the Temple; and while there, and on his way home, acted the part of the "laughing philosopher" with great zest and energy. A very trifling matter first excited his risibility, of which the *grand explosion* is thus described by Boswell, who, after stating that

"Johnson could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till he got without the Temple gate," adds, "He then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion ; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot-pavement, and sent forth peals so loud, that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple Bar to Fleet Ditch. This most ludicrous exhibition," he continues, "of the awful, melancholy, and venerable Johnson, happened well to counteract the feelings of sadness which I used to experience when parting with him for a considerable time. I accompanied him to his door, where he gave me his blessing."



CHAPTER VII.

Johnson visits Edinburgh. Scottish cleanliness. Trial by duel. Sir William Forbes. Independency of Scotland. St. Giles's church. Evil spirits and witchcraft. Sketch of Johnson and Boswell. Leith. Suicide. St. Andrews. Alteration of manners. John Knox. Retirement from the world. Scruples of conscience. Habit of fast composition. Montrose. Churchmen in Scotland like Christians in Turkey. Lord Monboddo. Gory. Aberdeen. Johnson's admirable pronunciation. Ellon. Slaines Castle. Earl of Errol. Connexions of relationship. Elgin. Moral evil. Mr. Kenneth M'Aulay. Seat of the Thane of Cawdor. The English clergy. Creeds and confessions. Presbyterian "family prayers." Fort George. Inverness. "English chapel." Lochness. A hovel and its inhabitants. Glenmorison. Johnson entertains a party of soldiers in a barn. Cocker's Arithmetic. Sleeping apartment. Johnson first conceives the thought of writing his *Journey to the Hebrides*. Auchnasheal. Rattakin. Johnson rebukes Boswell for his incivility. Glenelg. A Cyclops. Reposing "like a gentleman."

ONE of Boswell's most cherished wishes was, to entertain his illustrious friend in the "north country," and accompany him to the Hebrides. The project was favourably regarded by Johnson; but so many years elapsed between its formation and its accomplishment, and Boswell so long experienced, in regard to it, that "hope deferred" which "maketh the heart sick," that he almost began to despair of seeing his desire realised. Encouraged, however, in the spring of 1773, by some of Johnson's observations, to believe that he was at last in earnest about coming to Scotland that year, he exerted all his art and pains to "launch" the lexicographer from the metropolis. He persuaded Mrs. Thrale and Johnson's other civic friends to assist in "setting him afloat;" and Dr. William Robertson, the historian, Dr. Beattie, &c., to attract him to Caledonia. Beattie, having business in London, waited on the Doctor, and "threw some pleasing motives into the northern scale." These combined efforts succeeded.

In a letter to Boswell, dated "August 3," Johnson writes : "I shall set out from London on Friday, the sixth of this month, and propose not to loiter much by the way." He reached Newcastle on the 10th, from whence Mr. Scott (created, in 1821, Lord Stowell) accompanied him to Edinburgh. He travelled in post-chaises, of which the rapid motion was one of his most favourite amusements.

On Saturday the 14th he arrived at "Boyd's," at the head of the Canongate; a "base hovel," but the best of the only three inns in the "gude city" then existing, and was shortly after welcomed by the enthusiastic Boswell. Just before that gentleman came in, the Doctor had, unluckily, had a bad specimen of Scottish cleanliness. He asked to have some lemonade made sweeter; upon which the waiter, with his greasy fingers, put a lump of sugar into it. Johnson indignantly threw the potion out of the window, and had a great mind to knock the waiter down. Boswell and his distinguished visitor walked arm-in-arm up the High Street, to the house of the former in James's Court. "It was," he says, "a dusky night; I could not prevent Mr. Johnson being assailed by the evening effluvia of Edinburgh. A zealous Scotsman would have wished him to be without one of his five senses upon this occasion. As we marched slowly along, he grumbled in my ear, 'I smell you in the dark.' But he acknowledged that the breadth of the street, and the loftiness of the buildings on each side, made a noble appearance." At Mrs. Boswell's tea-table that evening he remarked that he did not think the ancient trial by duel so absurd as is generally supposed; "for," said he, "it was only allowed when the question was *in equilibrio*, as when one affirmed and another denied; and they had a notion that Providence would interfere in favour of him who was in the right; but as it was found that, in a duel, he who was in the right had not a better chance than he who was in the wrong, therefore society instituted the present mode of trial, and gave the advantage to him who is in the right."

On the following morning Johnson was introduced to Sir William Forbes; "who," says Boswell, "with distinguished abilities and application in his profession of a banker, is at once a good companion and a good Christian." In the course of conversation Sir William remarked, that he thought an

honest lawyer should never undertake a cause which he was satisfied was not a just one. "Sir," observed Johnson, "a lawyer has no business with the justice or injustice of the cause which he undertakes, unless his client asks his opinion, and then he is bound to give it honestly. Consider, sir, what is the purpose of courts of justice? It is, that every man may have his cause fairly tried by men appointed to try causes. A lawyer is not to tell what he knows to be a lie; he is not to produce what he knows to be a false deed; but he is not to usurp the province of the jury and the judge, and determine what shall be the effect of evidence—what shall be the result of legal argument. As it rarely happens that a man is fit to plead his own cause, lawyers are a class of the community who, by study and experience, have acquired the art and power of arranging evidence, and of applying to the points at issue what the law has settled. A lawyer is to do for his client all that his client might fairly do for himself, if he could. If, by a superiority of attention, of knowledge, of skill, and a better method of communication, he has the advantage of his adversary, it is an advantage to which he is entitled. There must always be some advantage on one side or other; and it is better that advantage should be had by talents than by chance. If lawyers were to undertake no causes till they were sure they were just, a man might be precluded altogether from a trial of his claim, though, were it judicially examined, it might be found a very just claim."

The next day was partly devoted to "lionising" the Doctor about the modern Athens. He went to the Parliament House, the Advocates' Library, and the under Parliament House, where the records of Scotland were then deposited. There was, by this time, a numerous circle of admirers attending him. Somebody spoke of happy moments for composition, and how a man can write at one time and not at another. "Nay," said Johnson, "a man may write at any time, if he will set himself *doggedly* to it." Boswell here expressed his deep regret that the Union had destroyed the independence of Scotland as a kingdom. "Sir," exclaimed Johnson, "never talk of your independency, who could let your queen remain twenty years in captivity, and then be put to death without even a pretence of justice, without your even attempting to rescue her; and such a queen, too, as every man of any gallantry of

spirit would have sacrificed his life for." They next visited the great church of St. Giles, the magnificence of which had been destroyed by the division of the desecrated fabric into four places of Presbyterian worship. "Come," cried the sage jocularly to Dr. Robertson, "let me see what was once a church!" The building was shamefully dirty. Johnson did not allude to this at the time; but when they came to the great door of the royal infirmary, where, upon a board, was painted, "Clean your feet;" he turned about slyly and said, "There is no occasion for putting this at the doors of your churches!" At supper one of the persons present, a Mr. Crosbie, advocate, remarked that he thought it the greatest blasphemy to suppose evil spirits counteracting the DEITY, and raising storms, for instance, to destroy His creatures. *Johnson.* "Why, sir, if moral evil be consistent with the government of the DEITY, why may not physical evil be also consistent with it? It is not more strange that there should be evil spirits than evil men; evil unembodied spirits than evil embodied spirits. And as to storms, we know there are such things, and it is no worse that evil spirits raise them than that they rise." *Crosbie.* "But it is not credible that witches should have effected what they are said in stories to have done." *J.* "Sir, I am not defending their credibility. I am only saying that your arguments are not good, and will not overturn the belief of witchcraft. And then, sir, you have all mankind, rude and civilised, agreeing in the belief of the agency of preternatural powers. You must take evidence—you must consider that wise and great men have condemned witches to die." *C.* "But an act of parliament put an end to witchcraft." *J.* "No, sir; witchcraft had ceased; and therefore an act of parliament was passed to prevent persecution for what was not witchcraft. Why it ceased, we cannot tell; as we cannot tell the reason of many other things."

Boswell and his worshipful guest began their tour on Wednesday, August 18th. The former remarks with great naïveté, "My wife did not seem quite easy when we left her; but away we went." He has drawn a sketch of himself and Johnson at this memorable period, from which we learn that the Doctor, now in his sixty-fourth year, was large, robust, approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency; that he was become a little dull of hearing; that,

notwithstanding the weakness of his sight, his perceptions were still uncommonly quick and accurate; that his head, and sometimes his body, shook with a kind of motion like the effect of palsy; that his dress was a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair-buttons of the same colour, a large bushy greyish wig, a plain shirt, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles; and that, when journeying, he wore boots, and a very wide brown cloth greatcoat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio Dictionary; and he carried in his hand a large English oak stick. Boswell's description of himself is too characteristic to be given in other words than his own: "Think, then," he says, "of a gentleman of ancient blood,¹ the pride of which was his predominant passion. He was then in his thirty-third year, and had been about four years happily married. His inclination was to be a soldier; but his father, a respectable judge, had pressed him into the profession of the law. He had travelled a good deal, and seen many varieties of human life. He had thought more than any body had supposed; and had a pretty good stock of general learning and knowledge. He had all Dr. Johnson's principles, with some degree of relaxation. He had rather too little than too much prudence; and, his imagination being lively, he often said things of which the effect was very different from the intention. He resembled sometimes

"The best-humoured man, with the worst-humoured muse."²

He cannot deny himself the vanity of finishing with the encomium of Dr. Johnson, whose friendly partiality to the companion of his tour represents him as one "whose acuteness would help my inquiry, and whose gaiety of conversation and civility of manners are sufficient to counteract the inconveniences of travel, in countries less hospitable than the one we have passed."

It appears from a passage in one of Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale² that Boswell was not a small gainer in the philosopher's esteem by their Scottish journey together.

¹ Boswell remarks elsewhere, "My great grandfather was Alexander, Earl of Kincardine, that eminent royalist whose character is given by Burnet, in his 'History of his own Times.' From him the blood of Bruce flows in my veins. Of such ancestry, who would not be proud?"

² The passage in question is as follows:—"Boswell will praise my reso-

The first place where the tourists appear to have halted was Leith. Here Johnson observed of the quay, " You have no occasion for so large a one ; your trade does not require it : but you are like a shopkeeper who takes a shop, not only for what he has to put into it, but that it may be believed he has a great deal to put into it." The sight of water probably suggested the subject of suicide by drowning ; in connexion with which Johnson said, " I should never think it time to make away with myself." " Suppose, sir," said Boswell, " that a man is absolutely sure that, if he lives a few days longer, he shall be detected in a fraud, the consequence of which will be utter disgrace, and expulsion from society." " Then, sir," answered Johnson, " let him go abroad to a distant country ; let him go to some place where he is *not* known. Don't let him go to the devil, where he *is* known."

After dining at Kinghorn, where they got a post-chaise, they had a dreary drive, in a dusky night, to St. Andrews ; and, after " a good supper," " made a procession to St. Leonard's College,¹ the landlord walking before them with a candle, and the waiter with a lantern." Here they sojourned for the night, and rose the next morning much refreshed. At breakfast, alteration of manners was talked of. Johnson remarked, that " our drinking less than our ancestors was owing to the change from ale to wine." " I remember," he said, " when all the *decent* people in Lichfield got drunk every night, and were not the worse thought of. Ale was cheap, so you pressed strongly. When a man must bring a bottle of wine, he is not in such haste. Smoking has gone out. To be sure, it is a shocking thing, blowing smoke out of our mouths into other people's mouths, eyes, and noses, and having the same thing done to us. . . . I remember when people in England changed a shirt only once a week. . . . Formerly, good tradesmen had no fire but in the kitchen ; never

lution and perseverance ; and I shall in return celebrate his good humour and perpetual cheerfulness. He has better faculties than I had imagined ; more justness of discernment, and more fecundity of images. It is very convenient to travel with him ; for there is no house where he is not welcomed with kindness and respect."

¹ The college had, some time before, been dissolved ; and Dr. Watson, the historian of Philip II., had purchased the ground, and what buildings remained. " When we entered his court," says Boswell, " it seemed quite academical ; and we found in his house very comfortable and genteel accommodation."

in the parlour, except on Sunday. My father, who was a magistrate of Lichfield, lived thus. They never began to have a fire in the parlour but on leaving off business, or some great revolution of their life."

Some of the above facts are curious and interesting. Drinking to excess has greatly diminished, even since Johnson's time. The filthy and offensive practice of smoking has, singularly enough, revived among us; and with the bad substitution of the cigar for the "sober, sedentary pipe."

The ecclesiastical ruins at St. Andrews filled Johnson with the deepest indignation against their sacrilegious authors; and upon Boswell's asking where John Knox was buried, the sturdy churchman burst out, "I hope, in the highway: I have been looking at his reformatory." It is a singular fact, that this fierce man was buried in a place which soon after became, and ever since has been, a *highway*; namely, the old churchyard of St. Giles's, Edinburgh. The day was fine, and Johnson kept his hat off when he was upon any part of the ground upon which the cathedral had stood. He observed, that "Knox had set on a mob, without knowing where it would end; and that differing from a man in doctrine was no reason why you should pull his house about his ears." "As we walked in the cloisters," says Boswell, "there was a solemn echo, while he talked loudly of a proper retirement from the world." Mr. Nairne (afterwards a judge of the Court of Session, by the title of Lord Dunsinan), was present, and said he had an inclination to retire. Boswell asked Johnson whether this "was right." "Yes," was the reply; "when he has done his duty to society. In general, as every man is obliged not only to 'love God, but his neighbour as himself,' he must bear his part in active life; yet there are exceptions. Those who are exceedingly scrupulous (which I do not approve, for I am no friend to scruples¹), and find their scrupulosity invincible, so that they

¹ Mrs. Piozzi says of Dr. Johnson, that "those teachers had more of his blame than praise, I think, who seek to oppress life with unnecessary scruples: 'Scruples would,' as he observed, 'certainly make men miserable, and seldom make them good. Let us ever studiously fly from those instructors against whom our SAVIOUR denounces heavy judgments, for having bound up burdens grievous to be borne, and laid them on the shoulders of mortal men.'" In connexion with this subject, Johnson once related the following anecdote:—"A person," he said, "has for these last

are quite in the dark, and know not what they shall do,—or those who cannot resist temptations, and find they make themselves worse by being in the world, without making it better,—may retire. I never read of a hermit; but, in imagination, I kiss his feet ; never of a monastery, but I could fall on my knees and kiss the pavement. But I think putting young people there who know nothing of life, nothing of retirement, is dangerous and wicked."

He wished to mount the towers of the cathedral, but it could not be done. One of them, which he was told was in danger, he wished not to be taken down ; " for," said he, " it may fall on some of the posterity of John Knox, and no great matter !" Dinner being mentioned, he exclaimed, " Ay, ay ; amidst all these sorrowful scenes, I have no objection to dinner."

This was provided at an inn, at the cost of the professors of the University of St. Andrews. Afterwards the Doctor, and some of his entertainers, visited the monument of Archbishop Sharpe (who was foully murdered in the arms of his daughter by the Covenanters, on Magus Moor, on the 3d of May, 1679), and saw in one of the streets a nonjuring

five weeks often called at my door, but would not leave his name, or other message ; but that he wished to speak with me. At last we met, and he told me that he was oppressed by scruples of conscience. I blamed him gently for not applying, as the rules of our Church direct, to his parish-priest, or other discreet clergyman ; when, after some compliments on his part, he told me that he was clerk to a very eminent trader, at whose warehouses much business consisted in packing goods, in order to go abroad : that he was often tempted to take paper and packthread enough for his own use ; and that he had indeed done so so often, that he could recollect no time when he had ever bought any for himself. 'But probably,' said I, 'your master was wholly indifferent with regard to such trivial emoluments ; and you had better ask for it at once, and so take your trifles with consent.' 'Oh, sir,' replies the visitor, 'my master bid me have as much as I pleased, and was half angry when I talked with him about it.' 'Then pray, sir,' said I, 'tease me no more about such airy nothings ;—and I was going on to be very angry, when I recollect that the fellow might be mad, perhaps ; so I asked him when he left the counting-house of an evening. 'At seven o'clock, sir.' 'And when do you go to bed, sir ?' 'At twelve o'clock.' 'Then,' replied I, 'I have at least learned thus much by my new acquaintance ;—that five hours of the four-and-twenty unemployed are enough for a man to go mad in ; so I would advise you, sir, to study algebra, if you are not an adept already in it : your head would get less *muddy*, and you will leave off tormenting your neighbours about paper and packthread, while we all live together in a world that is bursting with sin and sorrow.' It is, perhaps, needless to add, that this visitor came no more."

clergyman, strutting about in his canonicals, with a "jolly countenance and a round belly, like a well-fed monk."

They had tea at the inn ; and Johnson took occasion to say, that he "would advise every young man beginning to compose, to do it as fast as he can, to get a habit of having his mind to start promptly ; it is so much more difficult to improve in speed than in accuracy. . . . If a man is accustomed to compose slowly and with difficulty upon all occasions, there is danger that he may not compose at all, as we do not like to do that which is not done easily ; and, at any rate, more time is consumed in a small matter than ought to be." One of the professors, Dr. Watson, remarked, "Dr. Hugh Blair has taken a week to compose a sermon." *Johnson.* "Then, sir, that is for want of the habit of composing quickly, which I am insisting one should acquire." *Watson.* "Blair was not composing all the week, but only such hours as he felt himself disposed for composition." *J.* "Nay, sir ; unless you tell me the time he took, you tell me nothing. If I say I took a week to walk a mile, and have had the gout five days, and had been ill otherwise another day, I have taken but one day. I myself have composed about forty sermons.¹ I have begun a sermon after dinner, and sent it off by the post that night. . . I would say to a young divine, Here is your text ; let me see how soon you can make a sermon. Then I'd say, Let me see how much better you can make it. Thus I should see both his powers and his judgment."

The travellers left the ancient archiepiscopal city on August the 20th, and saw Dundee and Aberbrothick ; and at 11 P.M. arrived at Montrose, where, at a "sorry" hostel, Johnson stigmatised the waiter as a "rascal," for putting a lump of sugar into his lemonade with his fingers. It turned out this time, to Boswell's delight and his companion's chagrin, that the offender was an Englishman. Boswell proposed that they should carry lemons with them to Skye, that Johnson might be sure to have his favourite beverage. "Sir," said the Doctor, angrily, "I do not wish to be thought that feeble man who cannot do without any thing. Sir, it is

¹ Sir John Hawkins states, that Johnson, about 1756, wrote "pulpit discourses" for several beneficed clergymen ; and that his price for such compositions was a guinea each. Except as to some, he knew not in what hands they were. "I have," said he, "been paid for them, and have no right to inquire about them."

very bad manners to carry provisions to any man's house, as if he could not entertain you. To an inferior, it is oppressive; to a superior, it is insolent."

At Montrose they went to see the episcopal chapel; and Johnson gave an extra shilling to the clerk, saying, "He belongs to an honest church." Boswell reminded his friend, "that episcopals were but *dissenters* here; they were only *tolerated*." "Sir," answered he, "we are here as Christians in Turkey." As they travelled onwards from the last-named town towards Lawrencekirk and Monboddo, they had the Grampian hills in view, and some good land round them, but "void" of trees and hedges, which circumstance excited Johnson's astonishment. The eccentric Lord Monboddo, who (having been apprised in a note by Boswell of the Doctor's proximity to his residence) had invited the travellers to his hopitable board, received them at the gate of his antique mansion most courteously. He was dressed in a "rustic suit," and wore a little round hat. He told them that they saw him as Farmer Burnet, and they should have his family dinner—a farmer's dinner; adding, "I should not have forgiven Mr. Boswell had he not brought you here, Dr. Johnson." Writing subsequently to Mrs. Thrale respecting his conversation with Monboddo during this visit, Johnson remarks, "We agreed pretty well; only we disputed about adjusting the claim of merit between a shopkeeper of London and a savage of the American wildernesses. Our opinions were, I think, maintained on both sides without full conviction. Monboddo declared boldly for the savage; and I, *perhaps for that reason*, sided with the citizen."

Monboddo asked his guests to stay all night; and upon their pleading the necessity of their proceeding to Aberdeen without further delay, he replied, "Well, I am like the Romans; I shall say to you, 'Happy to come, happy to depart!'" Gory, his lordship's black servant, was sent as their guide to conduct them to the high road, which was nearly a mile distant from his master's dwelling. When he was about to depart from them, Johnson called to him, "Mr. Gory, give me leave to ask you a question. Are you baptised?" Gory told him he was, and confirmed by the Bishop of Durham. The Doctor then gave him a shilling.

The tourists reached Aberdeen at half-past eleven. The

inn was full ; but they were told that they might be lodged for the night in a two-bedded room. The next day was Sunday, and they attended the episcopal chapel ; and Boswell, after the conclusion of divine service, became sensible, as he relates, to an extraordinary degree, of Johnson's excellent English pronunciation. "I cannot account," he observes, "for its striking me more than any other day ; but it was as if new to me, and I listened to every sentence which he spoke as to a musical composition." At dinner, the Doctor ate several platefulls of Scotch broth, with barley and peas in it, and seemed very fond of the dish ; declaring, "I don't care how soon I eat it again." On the Monday following, they visited the Marischal College ; and, at one, repaired to the Townhall, at the invitation of the magistrates, one of whom presented Johnson with the freedom of the town, which he received "very politely." "There was," says Boswell, "a pretty numerous company assembled. It was striking to hear all of them drinking, 'Dr. Johnson ! Dr. Johnson !' in the Townhall of Aberdeen ; and then to see him with his burgess-ticket or diploma, in his hat, which he wore as he walked along the street, according to the usual custom."

They left Aberdeen at eight A.M. on Tuesday, August 24th, and breakfasted at Ellon. The landlady inquired of Boswell, "Is not this the great doctor that is going through the country ?" On receiving an answer in the affirmative, she said, "Ay, we heard of him ; I made an errand into the room on purpose to see him. There is something great in his appearance : it is a pleasure to have such a man in one's house—a man who does so much good. If I had thought of it, I would have shewn him a child of mine who has had a lump on its throat for some time." "But," said Boswell, "he is not a doctor of physic." "Is he an oculist ?" asked the landlord. "No," replied Boswell ; "he is only a very learned man." "They say," answered the landlord, "he is the greatest man in England, except Lord Mansfield." Dr. Johnson was highly entertained and pleased with this. He said, "I like the exception. To have called me the greatest man in England would have been an unmeaning compliment ; but the exception marked that the praise was in earnest, and, in Scotland, the exception must be Lord Mansfield, or—Sir John Pringle."

Boswell and his companion had been invited to Slaines Castle, and arrived there at three o'clock, as the dinner-bell was ringing. Lady Errol, in the absence of her husband, who was gone to an entertainment in the neighbourhood, received them courteously. About nine, the Earl came home. He conversed easily and sensibly with his distinguished guest, and at length escorted him and Boswell to their sleeping apartments. "I had," relates the latter, "a most elegant room; but there was a fire in it which blazed; and the sea, to which my windows looked, roared; and the pillows were made of the feathers of some sea-fowl, which had to me a disagreeable smell, so that, by all these causes, I was kept awake a good while. I saw, in imagination, Lord Errol's father, Lord Kilmarnock (who was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1746), and I was somewhat dreary. But the thought did not last long, and I fell asleep."

The next morning, at breakfast, Johnson talked of the advantage of keeping up the connexions of relationship. "Every man," he observed, "who comes into the world has need of friends. If he has to get them for himself, half his life is spent before his merit is known. Relations are a man's ready friends, who support him. When a man is in real distress, he flies into the arms of his relations. An old lawyer, who had much experience in making wills, told me, that after people had deliberated long, and thought of many for their executors, they settled at last by fixing on their relations. This shews the universality of the principle." Boswell regretted the decay of respect for men of family, and that a Nabob now could carry an election from them. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "the Nabob will carry it by means of his wealth, in a country where money is highly valued, as it must be where nothing can be had without money; but, if it comes to personal preference, the man of family will always carry it. There is generally a *scoundrelism* about a low man."

The travellers quitted Slaines about nine A.M.; and after going four miles out of their way to see a Druid's temple, (*i. e.* two stones set up on end, with a long one laid upon them), and dine with a country gentleman named Fraser, reached Banff at night. They arrived at Elgin on the day after, and saw the noble remains of the cathedral. At Forres, where they slept, Johnson was pleased to meet with a land-

lord who called himself "Wine-Cooper from London." The next morning Boswell introduced the vexed subject of the origin of evil. "Moral evil," said Johnson, is occasioned by free will, which implies choice between good and evil. With all the evil that there is, there is no man but would rather be a free agent, than a mere machine without the evil; and what is best for each individual must be best for the whole. If a man would rather be a machine, I cannot argue with him. He is a different being from me."

They breakfasted at Nairn, and then paid a visit to Mr. Kenneth M'Aulay, the reputed author of a *History of St. Kilda*, and the presbyterian minister at Calder. After dinner, they walked to the ancient castle there—the seat of the Thane of Cawdor. "The old tower," says Boswell, "must be of great antiquity. There is a drawbridge—what has been a moat—and an ancient court. There is a hawthorn-tree, which rises like a wooden pillar through the rooms of the castle; for, by a strange conceit, the walls have been built round it. The thickness of the walls, the small slanting windows, and a great iron door at the entrance on the second story as you ascend the stairs, all indicate the rude times in which this castle was erected. There were here some large venerable trees." The fortress above described has been much injured by fire since Boswell's time.

While the party were at Calder (pronounced Cawder) Castle, or after their return to Mr. M'Aulay's manse, that person began to talk slightly of the lower English clergy. Regarding him with a frown, Dr. Johnson observed, "This is a day of novelties: I have seen old trees in Scotland, and I have heard the English clergy treated with disrespect." In the evening, M'Aulay began a "rhapsody" against creeds and confessions. Johnson shewed that "what he called *imposition* was only a voluntary declaration of agreement in certain articles of faith, which a church has a right to require, just as any other society can insist on certain rules being observed by its members. Nobody is compelled to be of the church, as nobody is compelled to enter into a society." M'Aulay would not acknowledge the truth of these observations; upon which the Doctor remarked, "Sir, you are a bigot to laxness."

It was customary with the Presbyterian minister to have

"family prayers" before retiring to rest. Boswell expressed a doubt whether Johnson (who was absent at the moment) would be present during their recital ; and M'Aulay said that he would omit them, rather than give his illustrious guest offence. Johnson, however, said "he had no objection to hear the prayer." "This," relates Boswell, "was a pleasing surprise to me ; for he refused to go and hear Principal Robertson preach. 'I will hear him,' said he, 'if he will get up into a tree and preach ; but I will not give a sanction, by my presence, to a Presbyterian assembly.'"

A conversation took place about saying grace at breakfast as well as at dinner and supper ; in which the Doctor observed, "It is enough if we have stated seasons of prayer, no matter when. A man may as well pray when he mounts his horse, or a woman when she milks her cow, as at meals ; and custom is to be followed."¹

Before leaving the manse, Johnson generously offered to obtain a servitorship at Oxford for M'Aulay's son, a boy about eleven years old. He subsequently fulfilled this engagement.

Having a letter of introduction to Mr. Ferne, master of stores at Fort-George, the travellers proceeded from Calder to that place, where they were invited to dine with Sir Eyre Coote, its commander. A large company sat down to table. The dinner consisted of two complete courses, with a variety of wines ; and the regimental band of music played in the square before the windows after it. Boswell enjoyed the day much ; and Dr. Johnson said, "I shall always remember this fort with gratitude." "I could not help being struck with some admiration," records his vivacious companion, "at finding upon this barren sandy point such buildings, such a dinner, such company : it was like enchantment. Dr. Johnson, on the other hand, said to me more rationally, that 'it did not strike *him* as any thing extraordinary ; because he knew, here was a large sum of money expended in building a fort ; here was a regiment. If there had been less than what we found, it would have surprised him.' *He* looked coolly and

¹ The true reason for saying grace before meals appears to be, that since the fall inflicted a *curse* on every creature, it is proper to *bless* the viands of which we partake. Thus the ancient and very commonly used grace begins, "*Sanctify, O LORD, these Thy creatures,*" &c.

deliberately through all the gradations; *my* warm imagination jumped from the barren sands to the splendid dinner and brilliant company: to borrow the expression of an absurd poet,

‘Without ands or ifs,
I leapt from off the sands upon the cliffs.’

The whole scene gave me a strong impression of the power and excellence of human art.”

From Fort-George the tourists went to Inverness, and on Sunday, Aug. 29th, attended the “English chapel” there. The altar was a bare fir-table, with a coarse stool for kneeling on, covered with a piece of thick sail-cloth doubled, by way of a cushion. After church, they visited the ruins of the royal fortress, which have since been levelled into a bowling-green. On Monday, Aug. 30th, they continued their journey on horseback, attended by two servants and a couple of Highlanders as guides. It was a delightful day. The road lay by the side of Loch Ness. Johnson rode well; and as Boswell saw him now for the first time astride a steed, “jaunting about at his ease in quest of pleasure and novelty,” he immediately called to mind the very different occupations of the lexicographer’s former laborious life, his admirable productions, his *London*, his *Rambler*, &c. &c.; and the contrast made a strong impression on his imagination.

When they had ridden some distance, they alighted at a little hut, with an old-looking woman at the door of it. It was a wretched hovel of earth only, and for a window had merely a small hole, which was stopped with a piece of turf, that was taken out occasionally to let in the light. They entered the dwelling, in the middle of which was a fire of peat, the smoke going out at a hole in the roof. There was at one end, under the same roof, but divided by a kind of partition made of wattles, a pen or fold in which were a number of kids. Johnson was curious to know where the woman slept; and gave her to understand as much. At this she expressed great alarm; which coquetry in so wretched a being afforded the tourists much amusement. Boswell at last succeeded in gaining a peep into the lady’s bedchamber. “There was,” he says, “a little partition of wicker, rather more neatly done than that of the fold, and close by the wall was a kind of bedstead of wood, with heath upon it by way of bed;

at the foot of which I saw some blankets or covering rolled up in a heap." The woman's name was Fraser, and her husband was eighty years of age. They had five children, the eldest only thirteen. This family had four stacks of barley, twenty-four sheaves in each, sixty goats, and a few fowls. They lived all the spring without meal, upon milk and curds-and-whey alone: and what they got by the sale of their goats, kids, and fowls, maintained them during the rest of the year. Boswell partook of the dame's brandy, and gave her some money for snuff. At length she dismissed her visitors with many prayers in Gaelic. They slept at the house of the deputy-governor of Fort-Augustus, and on the next day travelled eleven miles through a wild country to an inn in Glenmorison, where Johnson entertained a party of soldiers in a barn, and was saluted "my lord" by them all; at which he observed to Boswell, with an air of satisfaction, "I am quite feudal, sir." The tourists' tea was made by their landlord's daughter—a modest, civil girl, very neatly dressed. Johnson presented her with a copy of Cocker's Arithmetic, which he had purchased at Inverness, and was the only work he had about him. Subsequently, upon Boswell's remarking to him upon the singularity of his choosing such a travelling companion, he answered, "Why, sir, if you are to have but one book with you upon a journey, let it be a book of science. When you have read through a book of entertainment, you know it, and it can do no more for you; but a book of science is inexhaustible." There were two pallets in the travellers' sleeping apartment, and a woman's gown was hung on a rope to make a curtain of separation between them. After hesitating a little, whether to undress or lie down in their clothes, they offered up their private devotions, and "plunged" into their respective beds. They chatted a little, and then Johnson exclaimed, "God bless us both, for JESUS CHRIST's sake! Good night!" and fell asleep immediately. Boswell was not so fortunate. "I fancied myself," he says, "bit by innumerable vermin under the clothes; and that a spider was travelling from the *wainscot* towards my mouth. At last I fell into insensibility."

On the morrow, they passed through Glensheal, and came to a "rich green valley," where they halted a while to refresh their weary steeds. Johnson, in his 'Journey,' thus describes

his situation here : “ I sat down on a bank, such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had, indeed, no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me, and on either side, were high hills, which, by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well, I know not ; for here I first conceived the thought of this narration.”¹

Soon afterwards the tourists reached Auchnasheal, “ a kind of rural village,” where they rested a while on a turf-seat at the end of a house, and were quickly surrounded by men, women, and children, not one of whom could speak English. Boswell observed to his illustrious friend, that “ it was much the same as being with a tribe of Indians.” “ Yes, sir,” was the answer, “ but not so terrifying.” Johnson pleased himself and these rude people by distributing halfpence among the younger members of the party. After leaving Auchnasheal, the travellers “ rode on well,” till they came to the high mountain called the Rattakin ; by which time Johnson and the horses were a good deal fatigued. They climbed the steep with difficulty, which was much increased in going down on the other side, in consequence of the Doctor’s weight and corpulency. Having accomplished their descent, they rode about ten miles farther in dreary silence. Seeing his companion apparently absorbed in meditation, Boswell pushed forward in order that he might get the inn at Glenelg ready for Johnson’s reception. The Doctor, however, called him back with a tremendous shout ; and on learning his intentions, angrily said, “ Do you know, I should as soon have thought of picking a pocket as doing so.” Boswell replied, “ I am diverted with you, sir ;” and was confounded by Johnson’s wrathful rejoinder, “ Sir, I could never be diverted by incivility. Doing such a thing makes one lose confidence in him who has done it, as one cannot tell what he may do next.” At Glenelg there was no provender for their horses, nothing to eat or drink, except a bottle of rum and some sugar ; and the sleeping room was damp and dirty, with bare walls ; a variety of bad smells ; a coarse, black, greasy fir-table, with

¹ *A Journey to the Western Isles,—Works, x. 361, 8vo, 1787.*

forms to match : and out of a wretched bed, a fellow, whom the Doctor in his ‘ Journey’ compares to a Cyclops, started from his sleep. Johnson bore this miserable accommodation with philosophical calmness ; although his anger at the well-meant attempt of Boswell to leave him on the road, had not subsided. “ Sir,” he said, on finding his friend disposed to defend his conduct, “ had you gone on, I was thinking that I should have returned with you to Edinburgh, and then have parted from you, and never spoken to you more.” They sent for fresh hay, with which they made couches for themselves, each in a room equally sordid.

“ *I*,” says Johnson in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, “ ordered hay to be laid thick upon the bed, and slept upon it in my greatcoat. Boswell laid sheets upon his bed, and reposed in linen, *like a gentleman*.”



CHAPTER VIII.

Johnson's reconciliation with Boswell. Skye. Sir Alexander Macdonald. Johnson indulges his bearish propensities. Dr. Cheyne's admirable rule. Corrichatachin. The second sight. M'Queen. Malcolm Macleod. The approach to Rasay. The ruined chapel. Kingsburg. Flora Macdonald. Prince Charles Edward's bedstead. Dunvegan castle. Lady Macleod. Keeping a seraglio. Johnson's birthday. Laziness worse than the toothache. Ulinish. Anecdote of Garrick. Man in a jail better off than one in a ship. Johnson rails at the Scots. Talisker. The Scottish "Clergy." Johnson a fox-hunter. Boswell becomes inebriate, and makes a riot. Johnson makes himself agreeable to the Highland ladies. Dr. Young. Doddridge's family motto. Rough passage to Col. Hector M'Lean. Johnson's mode of arguing.

BOSWELL was so affected at Johnson's displeasure, that he slept ill, and took the first opportunity in the morning of endeavouring to appease him. The Doctor owned that he had spoken in a passion; that he would not have done what he threatened; and that if he had, he should have been ten times worse than his friend; that forming intimacies would indeed be "limning the water," were they liable to sudden dissolution; and he added, "Let's think no more on't." "Well, then, sir," said Boswell, "I shall be easy. Remember, I am to have fair warning in case of any quarrel. You are never to spring a mine upon me. It was absurd in me to believe you." "You deserved," replied Johnson, "about as much, as to believe me from night to morning."

After breakfast they set out in a boat to Skye, and reached the shore of Armidale in that island before one P.M. Sir Alexander Macdonald (chief of the clan of that name) and his lady came down to receive them. Macdonald having been an Eton scholar, and being a man of talent, Johnson had been very well pleased with him in London. He was now as much displeased by finding him not surrounded by

his clan, and welcoming his visitors to "a festive entertainment." In a letter to Mrs. Thrale, he remarks: "We had a passage of about twelve miles to the point where Sir Alexander Macdonald resided, having come from his seat in the middle of the island to a small house on the shore, as we believe that he might *with less reproach entertain us meanly*. If he aspired to meanness, his retrograde ambition was completely gratified; but he did not succeed equally in escaping reproach. He had no cook, nor, I suppose, much provision; nor had the lady the common decencies of her tea-table: we picked up our sugar with our fingers. Boswell was very angry, and reproached him with his improper parsimony." So "angry" was Boswell that he meditated an escape from his entertainer's house the very next day: "but Johnson resolved that they should weather it out till Monday. During this interval, the travellers, who were "full of the old Highland spirit," attempted in vain to communicate to their host a portion of their feudal and patriarchal enthusiasm. "Were I in your place, sir," said Johnson to him, "in seven years I would make this an independent island. I would roast oxen whole, and hang out a flag as a signal to the Macdonalds to come and get beef and whisky." Sir Alexander started difficulties. "Nay, sir," replied the Doctor; "if you are born to object, I have done with you. Sir, I would have a magazine of arms." Macdonald answered, "They would rust." "Let there be men to keep them clean," was the rejoinder; "your ancestors did not use to let their arms rust." Sir Alexander heard him with so "polite a good nature, that," says Boswell, "I should not forgive myself were I to record all that Dr. Johnson's ardour led him to say." We may hence infer that the Doctor, on this occasion, indulged his bearish propensities. His expostulations, above cited, were at all events singularly inappropriate; as a Highlander going armed at this period incurred the most severe penalties, and (in the words of Sir Walter Scott) "twelve Highlanders and a bag-pipe made a rebellion."

On Sunday, Sept. 5, Boswell had some serious conversation with his Mentor, in the course of which the latter observed: "Sir, Dr. Cheyne has laid down a rule to himself, which should be imprinted on every mind: 'To neglect nothing to secure my eternal peace, more than if I had been

certified I should die within the day: nor to mind any thing that my secular obligations and duties demanded of me, less than if I had been insured to live fifty years more."

They resumed their journey on the day following; and at Corrichatachin, a farm of Sir Alexander Macdonald's, were heartily welcomed by its occupier, and enjoyed "the comfort of a table plentifully furnished, the satisfaction of which was heightened by a numerous and cheerful company; and we," says Boswell, "for the first time, had a specimen of the joyous social manners of the inhabitants of the Highlands. They talked in their own ancient language with fluent vivacity; and sung many rare songs with such spirit, that, though Dr. Johnson was treated with the utmost respect and attention, there were moments in which he seemed to be forgotten. For myself, though but a Lowlander, having picked up a few words of the language, I presumed to mingle in their mirth, and joined in the choruses with as much glee as any of the company." Johnson, being weary with his journey, repaired early to his chamber; but he did not retire to rest until he had addressed a Latin ode to Mrs. Thrale.

The next day was wet and stormy. Boswell felt in low spirits, and as if in a prison. He was glad when tea-time arrived, and did not exert himself to make Johnson talk, that he might not have the labour of recording his conversation. Part of it, however, he has preserved. The Doctor inquired if there were any remains of the second sight; and upon the party saying that he "*was resolved* not to believe it, because it was founded on no principle," remarked: "There are many things then, which we are sure are true, that you will not believe. What principle is there why a loadstone attracts iron? why an egg produces a chicken by heat? why a tree grows upwards when the natural tendency of all things is downwards? Sir, it depends upon the degree of evidence that you have."

After breakfast, the following morning, the tourists were on the point of proceeding on their excursion, having decided to ride to the sea-side, about two miles distant, and then embark in a country fishing-boat; when they received a polite "card" from a "decent minister," named M'Queen, inviting them to Rasay, and the offer of the Laird of Rasay's "carriage" to convey them thither across the water. Shortly

after, M'Queen made his appearance, accompanied by Mr. Malcolm Macleod, of whom Boswell has drawn the following graphic portrait : " He was now sixty-two years of age, hale, and well-proportioned,—with a manly countenance, tanned by the weather, yet having ruddiness in his cheeks, over a great part of which his rough beard extended. His eye was quick and lively, yet his look was not fierce, but he appeared at once firm and good humoured. He wore a pair of brogues ; tartan hose which came up only near to his knees, and left them bare ; a purple camblet kilt ; a black waist-coat ; a short green cloth coat bound with gold cord ; *a yellowish bushy wig* ; a large blue bonnet with a gold thread button. I never saw a figure that gave a more perfect representation of a Highland gentleman." The tourists (accompanied by Macleod on foot) rode to the shore, and entered Rasay's " carriage," which was a good strong open boat made in Norway. It had four stout rowers, " particularly," says Boswell, " a Macleod, a robust black-haired fellow, half-naked, and bare-headed, something between a wild Indian and an English tar." Johnson sat high in the stern, " like a magnificent Triton." Macleod sang a Gaelic song. The boatmen and M'Queen chorused, and all went well ; they rowed along the coast of Scalpa, a rugged island about four miles in length, which Johnson proposed that he and his fellow-traveller should buy, and found a school and church upon it. After they were out of the shelter of Scalpa, and in the sound between it and Rasay, the sea became very rough, to the discomfort of Boswell, who was a timid sailor ; and Johnson's spurs fell overboard. The approach to Rasay was very pleasing. " We saw before us," relates Boswell, " a beautiful bay well defended by a rocky coast ; a good family mansion ; a fine verdure about it, with a considerable number of trees ; and beyond it hills and mountains in gradation of wildness." The boatmen sang lustily ; and as they neared the shore, their vocal music was succeeded by that of the reapers, who were singing or rather shouting, " while they worked with a bounding activity." The laird of the island and a large party met them on their way from the " carriage" to the chief dwelling ; into which they were introduced " with politeness," to cite Johnson's words to Mrs. Thrale, " which not the court of Versailles could have

thought defective." Immediately upon their arrival, they were served with excellent brandy. On a side-board they found a capital dinner and a variety of wines. Then came coffee and tea. Soon afterwards a fiddler appeared, and a little ball began. The laird danced with spirit, and Macleod "bounded like a roe." Johnson was so delighted that he said, "I know not how we shall get away." There was a party of thirty at supper; and all was good humour and gaiety, without intemperance. After dinner on the next day, Boswell, Macleod, and another Highland gentleman, went out in quest of black cocks, but without success. The evening, like its predecessor, was spent in harmless mirth. It was told Johnson that one of the company had studied himself into infidelity. "Then," replied the sage, "he must study himself out of it again; that is the way. Drinking largely will sober him again."

On the following day, Sept. 10, Boswell and two others explored the island. Johnson remained behind, and visited the ruins of a chapel close to the mansion of his host, saying, "I look with reverence upon every place that has been set apart for religion." He kept off his hat while he was within the walls of the sacred building; in connexion with which, his 'Journey' contains the following observations :

"It is not only in Rasay that the chapel is unroofed and useless; through the few islands which we visited, we neither saw nor heard of any house of prayer, except in Skye, that was not in ruins. The malignant influence of Calvinism has blasted ceremony and decency together; and if the remembrance of papal superstition is obliterated, the monuments of papal piety are likewise effaced."

He and his protégé were prevented from setting out on the next morning, by a storm of wind and rain; they contrived, however, to pass the day very pleasantly. The Doctor, notwithstanding, began to wish to be on the move. There was not enough intellectual entertainment for him at Rasay, after he had satisfied all his curiosity in regard to that island and its peculiarities. Bidding adieu to its hospitable shores on Sunday, Sept. 16, the tourists, in a large boat, attended by their host, Macleod, M'Queen, and some others, had a delightful sail to Portree, in the isle of Skye. On their landing,

they found letters from Lord Elibank, in which he expressed his earnest desire to have the honour of attending the lexicographer, whom he valued more than any king in Christendom, as soon as he should know where to find him. Here the chief of Rasay and Macleod left them with cordial embraces. In the evening, Johnson and Boswell mounted their horses, and after a ride of seven miles in the computation of Skye, which, "however," says the latter, "has no connexion whatever with real distance," arrived at Kingsburgh, and were received by the husband of the celebrated Flora Macdonald, who so heroically assisted Prince Charles Edward, grandson of King James II., to escape from the troops of the Hanoverian Elector after the battle of Culloden. Mr. Macdonald was a gallant Highlander in tartan plaid, a large blue bonnet with a knot of black riband like a cockade, a brown short coat of a kind of duffil, a tartan waistcoat with gold buttons and gold button-holes, a bluish philibeg, and tartan hose. He had jet-black hair tied behind, and was a large stately man, with a steady sensible countenance. The travellers entered a comfortable parlour with a good fire; and a dram went round. By and by supper was served, and Flora, the lady of the house, made her appearance. She had been informed that Boswell was coming to Skye, and one Mr. Johnson, a young English *buck* (a word synonymous with the modern term "dandy,") with him; on hearing which the Doctor was much entertained. He was, however, "rather quiescent," and went early to bed. Not so his companion. He was "in a cordial humour," in "high glee," and "promoted a cheerful glass." He does not mention the hour at which he retired, but he states that he slept in the same room with his great friend—an upper chamber decorated with maps and prints. Each had a neat bedstead, with tartan curtains. Johnson's was indeed a celebrated piece of furniture; for it had been occupied by Charles Edward on one of the nights after the failure of his attempt to regain the throne of his fathers in 1746-7, while he was eluding the pursuit of the bloodthirsty emissaries of government.

After breakfast, the next morning, Macdonald conducted the tourists in a boat across one of the arms of the sea which flow in upon all the coasts of Skye, to a mile beyond a place called Grishinish, where their horses had been sent round to

meet them. Here they bade him farewell, and bestriding their steeds, passed through a wild moor, in many places so soft that they were obliged to walk. This was very fatiguing to Johnson, who once, when attempting to alight, measured his length on the ground. They reached Dunvegan late in the afternoon. "The great size of the castle," says Boswell, "which is partly old and partly new, and is built upon a rock close to the sea, while the land around it presents nothing but wild, moorish, hilly, and craggy appearances, gave a rude magnificence to the scene." Having dismounted, they ascended a very long flight of steps, were introduced into a stately dining-room, and received by Lady Macleod, mother of the laird, who, having been detained on the road, did not arrive till some time after them. Their entertainment here was in so elegant a style, and reminded Johnson so forcibly of England, that he became quite joyous, and said, "Boswell, we came in at the wrong end of this island." "Sir," replied Boswell, "it was best to keep this for the last." He answered, "I would have it both first and last."

That night they slept well, and they lay long the next morning. After breakfast they surveyed the castle and garden. At dinner they feasted on admirable venison; "in a word, all that a good table has." A jovial company assembled at supper. "The laird," writes Boswell, "surrounded by so many of his clan, was to me a pleasing sight. They listened with wonder and pleasure, while Dr. Johnson harangued. I am vexed that I cannot take down his full strain of eloquence."

The next day was wet. At bedtime, Miss Macleod presented Johnson, who had a cold, with a large flannel nightcap,¹ and prevailed on him to drink a little brandy. After the ladies had left the dinner-table on the following afternoon, the Doctor observed, "I have often thought, that if I kept a seraglio, the ladies should all wear linen gowns, or cotton — I mean stuffs made of vegetable substances. I would have no silk; you cannot tell when it is clean: it will be very nasty before it is perceived to be so. Linen detects its own dirtiness." Upon the above *dicta* Boswell remarks: "To hear the grave Dr. Samuel Johnson, 'that majestic

¹ Johnson ordinarily did not wear a nightcap. He tied a handkerchief on his head instead.

teacher of moral and religious wisdom,' while sitting solemn in an arm-chair in the isle of Skye, talk *ex cathedrâ* of his keeping a seraglio, and acknowledge that the supposition had *often* been in his thoughts, struck me so forcibly with ludicrous contrast, that I could not but laugh immoderately. He was too proud to submit, even for a moment, to be the object of ridicule, and instantly retaliated with such keen sarcastic wit, and such a variety of degrading images, of every one of which I was the object, that, though I can bear such attacks as well as most men, I yet found myself so much the sport of all the company, that I would gladly expunge from my mind every trace of this severe retort."

On Saturday, Sept. 18, Johnson entered his travelling companion's room before breakfast, to forbid him to mention that it was his (Johnson's) birthday, and was displeased at learning that he had already done so. In a letter to Mrs. Thrale he makes the following allusion to this circumstance: "Boswell, with some of his troublesome kindness, has informed this family and reminded me, that the 18th of September is my birthday. The return of my birthday, if I remember it, fills me with thoughts which it seems to be the general care of humanity to escape. I can now look back upon three score and four years, in which little has been done and little has been enjoyed; a life diversified by misery, spent part in the sluggishness of penury, and part under the violence of pain, in gloomy discontent or importunate distress. But, perhaps, I am better than I should have been if I had been less afflicted. With this I will try to be content."

The laird was too late in coming to the morning meal on the following Monday; which gave Johnson occasion to say that "laziness was worse than the toothache." To this Boswell expressed his dissent, and added, "a basin of cold water, or a horsewhip, will cure laziness." "No, sir," replied the sage, "it will only put off the fit; it will not cure the disease. I have been trying to cure my laziness all my life, and could not do it." "But," rejoined Boswell, in allusion to Johnson and his great work, the Dictionary, "if a man does in a shorter time what might be the labour of a life, there is nothing to be said against him." "Suppose that flattery to be true," was the Doctor's answer, "the consequence would be, that the world would have no right to cen-

sure a man ; but that will not justify him to himself." While they were at breakfast, Johnson remarked, " In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it,—the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those who took it."

The next day proved fine ; and, although the Doctor was loath to leave Dunvegan, the weather was at this season so bad, and so very uncertain, that at Boswell's entreaty he overcame this reluctance, and quitted the castle, where for a fortnight he had been so hospitably and pleasantly entertained. About six P.M. they reached Ulinish, where they were joined by Mr. M'Queen, who had taken his departure from Dunvegan on the preceding Saturday. Speaking of biography on the evening of September 22d, Johnson said, " He did not think the life of any literary man in England had been well written. Beside the common incidents of life, it should tell us his studies, his mode of living, the means by which he attained to excellence, and his opinion of his own works." The next day, the Doctor related the following amusing anecdote of Garrick. That great actor, although accustomed to face multitudes, was so disconcerted by a new mode of appearance, *i. e.* as a witness in Westminster Hall, that he could not understand what was asked. It was a cause where an actor claimed a free benefit, that is to say, a benefit without paying the expense of the house. Garrick was asked, " Sir, have you a free benefit ?" " Yes." " Upon what terms have you it ?" " Upon—the terms—of—a free benefit." He was dismissed as one from whom no information could be obtained.

It was at Ulinish that Johnson made the well-known remark, that a man in a ship was worse than a man in a jail. " The latter," said he, " has more room, better food, and commonly better company, and is in safety." " Ay, but," said M'Queen, " the man in the ship has the pleasing hope of getting to shore." Johnson. " Sir, I am not talking of a man's getting to shore, but of a man while he is in a ship ; and then, I say, he is worse than a man while he is in jail. A man in a jail *may* have the '*pleasing hope*' of getting

out. A man confined for only a limited time actually has it."

On Thursday, September 23d, the tourists left Ulinish, and pursued their journey by water. As they sailed along, Johnson railed against the Scots, affirming that they had hardly any trade, any money, or any elegance, before the Union. Boswell ventured to remark that, at all events, his countrymen had wine anterior to that event. "No, sir," said Johnson; "you had some weak stuff, the refuse of France, which would not make you drunk." "I assure you, sir," eagerly answered Boswell, "there was a great deal of drunkenness." "No, sir," was the startling reply; "there were people who died of dropsies, which they contracted in trying to get drunk!"

The travellers went on shore near the house of Ferneley, a farm possessed by a Macleod, who entertained them at dinner; after which they rode for about three miles to Tassiske, an extensive farm, where they were welcomed by Donald M'Lean, the young laird of Col, and "a little lively man." After supper, Boswell talked of the assiduity of the Scottish "clergy" in visiting and privately instructing their parishioners, and remarked how much in this respect they excelled the English priesthood. It is to be feared that the latter were justly liable to the charge of sluggishness and apathy in parochial ministration at that period. Johnson, however, would not let the observation pass. He tried to turn it off by saying, "There are different ways of instructing. Our clergy pray and preach. I do not believe your people are better instructed. If they are, it is the blind leading the blind; for your clergy are not instructed themselves. . . . The clergy of England have produced the most valuable books in support of religion, both in theory and practice. What have your clergy done since you sunk into presbyterianism?"

At breakfast the next morning, Johnson affirmed that he rode harder at a fox-chase than any body. We can hardly picture to ourselves the colossal and unwieldy Johnson joining in so violent and dangerous a sport. "He certainly," observes Mrs. Piozzi, "rode on Mr. Thrale's old hunter with a good firmness; and, though he would follow the hounds fifty miles on end sometimes, would never own himself either

tired or amused. ‘I have now learned,’ said he, ‘by hunting, to perceive that it is no diversion at all, nor ever takes a man out of himself for a moment. The dogs have less sagacity than I could have prevailed on myself to suppose; and the gentlemen often call to me not to ride over them. It is very strange, and very melancholy, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them.’ He was, however, proud to be amongst the sportsmen; and I think no praise ever went so close to his heart, as when Mr. Hamilton called out one day upon Brighthelmstone Downs, ‘Why, Johnson rides as well, for aught I see, as the most illiterate fellow in England.’ ”

M‘Lean proposed that his guests should not limit their expedition to Mull, which they had intended doing; but also see the islands of Egg, Muck, Col, and Tiree. Accordingly, on the next day, the tourists, under the young laird’s guidance, set out for that purpose. They dined at the inn at Konser, where M‘Queen left them, and Boswell found a letter from his spouse. Having duly satisfied their hunger, they sent their horses round a point of land, that they might avoid some very bad road, and went forward by sea.

It was seven o’clock when they entered their boat. The weather was showery, and the sky soon grew dark. Johnson “sat silent and patient.” Once he said, as he looked on the rocky and black coast of Skye—black, as being seen in the dusk—“This is very solemn.” Their boatmen were rude singers, and “seemed,” says Boswell, “so like wild Indians, that a very little imagination was necessary to give one an impression of being on an American river.” They landed at Strolimus, and thence walked for two miles by the light of a single star, with a guide before them, to Corrichatachin, where they arrived about eleven. They were most hospitably received by the master and mistress, who were just going to bed; but with unaffected, ready kindness, made a good fire, and at twelve o’clock had supper on the table. Johnson soon retired; and when one bowl of punch was finished, Boswell rose to follow his example. He was induced, alas, to sit down again, by the “heartiness” of his honest landlord. Another bowl was concocted, and finished. A third and a fourth succeeded; and the hapless companion of the Rambler, after making a riot, reeled to his sleeping-room in a

state of happy unconsciousness, at or near the hour of five in the morning. He awoke at noon with a racking headache, and in mortal apprehension of a stern reproof from Johnson. The moralist came into the delinquent's chamber about one, and accosted him, "What, drunk yet?" "His tone of voice," relates Boswell, "was not that of severe upbraiding; so I was relieved a little. 'Sir,' said I, 'they kept me up.' He answered, 'No, you kept them up, you drunken dog.' This he said with good-humoured English pleasantry." Soon afterwards, Boswell's topping associates assembled round his bed; and one of them insisted that he should take a dram. "Ay," said Johnson, "fill him drunk again. Do it in the morning, that we may laugh at him all day. It is a poor thing for a fellow to get drunk at night, and skulk to bed, and let his friends have no sport." The Doctor's jocularity, accompanied by a moderate dose of brandy, set his crestfallen colleague quite at ease both in mind and body. The day was wet and windy; but good cheer and good society helped to beguile the time; and ere sunset Boswell came to the conclusion that his "last night's riot was no more than such a social excess as may happen without much moral blame; and recollecting that some physicians maintained, that a fever produced by it was, upon the whole, good for health." "So different," he moralises, "are our reflections on the same subject at different periods; and such the excuses with which we palliate what we know to be wrong."

The weather continued so bad on Monday, Sept. 27th, that the tourists could not travel. Johnson was quite easy and social; and though he drank no fermented liquor, toasted the Highland beauties of the company after dinner with great readiness. All the party were much entertained to find him so free and pleasant; and the ladies vied with each other in crying out, with a strong Celtic pronunciation, "Toctor Shonson, Toctor Shonson, your health!" One of them, "a lively, pretty little woman, sat down on his knee, put her hands round his neck, and kissed him." "Do it again," said he, "and let us see who will tire first."

The gentlemen remained over their punch after Johnson and Boswell had retired to their chambers. "The manner in which they were attended struck me," remarks the latter, "as singular. The bell being broken, a smart lad lay on a

table in the corner of the room, ready to spring up and bring the kettle whenever it was wanted. They continued drinking and singing Gaelic songs till near five in the morning."

Tuesday threatened to be a more inclement day than its predecessor; and the travellers experienced the irksomeness of confinement. They had no rooms to themselves. The bedchambers were common to all the house: servants eat in Dr. Johnson's; and Boswell's was a kind of general rendezvous of all under the roof—children and dogs not excepted. The good people of Corrichatachin had no notion that a man could have any occasion but for a mere sleeping place. Happily, the weather cleared up between one and two o'clock; and at four, the sage and his disciple resumed their journey. "As we were going," relates Boswell, "the Scottish phrase of *honest man*, which is an expression of kindness and regard, was again and again applied by the company to Dr. Johnson. I was also treated with much civility; and I must take some merit from my assiduous attention to him, and from my contriving that he shall be easy wherever he goes; that he shall not be asked twice to eat or drink any thing (which always disgusts him); that he shall be provided with water at his meals; and many such little things, which, if not attended to, would fret him. I also may be allowed to claim some merit in leading the conversation: I do not mean leading as in an orchestra, by playing the first fiddle; but leading as one does in examining a witness—starting topics, and making him pursue them. He appears to me like a great mill, into which a subject is thrown to be ground. It requires, indeed, fertile minds to furnish materials for this mill. I regret whenever I see it unemployed; but sometimes I feel myself quite barren, and having nothing to throw in."

The tourists had a fine evening, and at an early hour arrived at Ostig, the residence of Mr. Martin M'Pherson, "minister" of Slate, who received them with much kindness. The next morning, several gentlemen came to enjoy Johnson's society. The party were confined to the house during the day, and the following one, by the roughness of the weather; but the hours "slipped along imperceptibly." Of the Doctor's conversation on this occasion we will give one or two interesting samples. He said, he believed Dr. Young was not a great scholar, nor had studied regularly the art of writing;

that there were very fine things in his *Night Thoughts*, though you could not find twenty lines together without some extravagance. Dr. Philip Doddridge, the Nonconformist, being mentioned, he remarked : “ He was author of one of the finest epigrams in the English language. The subject is his family motto, *Dum vivimus, vivamus*; which, in its primary signification, is, to be sure, not very suitable to a Christian divine ; but he paraphrased it thus :

‘ Live while you live, the *Epicure* would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day.
Live while you live, the sacred *Preacher* cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
LORD, in my views let both united be ;
I live in pleasure, when I live to Thee.’

On Friday, Oct. 1st, the factor to Sir Alexander M'Donald, in Slate, insisted that all the company should go to the house at Armidale (which Sir Alexander had left), and be his guests, till Johnson and Boswell had an opportunity of sailing to Mull. They accordingly got there to dinner, and passed the day very cheerfully, being no less than fourteen in number.

While the travellers were chatting quietly on the morning of the Sunday following, they were suddenly roused at being told that the wind was fair, and that a vessel was about to depart for Mull. Johnson, with composure and solemnity, repeated the observation of Epictetus, that “as man has the voyage of death before him, whatever may be his employment, he should be ready at his master’s call ; and an old man should never be far from the shore, lest he should not be able to get himself ready.” He rode, and Boswell and the other gentlemen walked, about an English mile, to the strand, where the vessel lay. Here the Rambler returned thanks for all civilities. He and his fellow-tourist were carried to the ship in a small boat, and they set sail “very briskly” about one o’clock. Johnson soon felt ill, and retired under cover. Boswell remained on deck, but at length grew as sick as his companion. Presently the wind changed ; and as they advanced, a violent storm came on. “ I now saw,” says Boswell, “ what I never saw before,—a prodigious sea, with immense billows, coming upon a vessel, so as that it seemed hardly possible to escape. There was something grandly horrible in the sight.” After tossing about some time

in darkness and peril, the bark ran before the wind into the harbour of Lochiern, in the isle of Col. All this while, Johnson, having recovered, and being ignorant of his danger, lay on one of the beds in the cabin quiet and unconcerned, with a greyhound, belonging to the young Laird of Col (who was one of the voyagers), at his back, keeping him warm. It being impossible to land, as the storm had increased, he remained where he was, without any nourishment, till the next morning, when Boswell expressed his astonishment on finding the health of his friend unimpaired by his abstinence. Upon this the Doctor remarked, that "when he lodged in the Temple, and had no regular system of life, he had fasted for two days at a time, during which he had gone about visiting, though not at the hours of dinner or supper; that he had drunk tea, but eaten no bread; that this was no intentional fasting, but happened just in the course of a literary life."

Mounted on a little wild horse (called a *shelty*), with a straw halter on its head, escorted by the young chief above mentioned, and accompanied by Boswell on foot, Johnson, on quitting the vessel, proceeded, in a heavy rain, to the poor temporary house of a Captain M'Lean, which stood about an English mile from the shore. Here the day passed pleasantly away, and the travellers resolved to stay a little time on the island. In bed, the following morning, the Doctor waxed very facetious, and told Boswell an amusing anecdote, in illustration of the surprising fact that "people will go to a distance for what they may have at home." "I knew a lady," he related, "who came up from Lincolnshire to Knightsbridge with one of her daughters, and gave five guineas a week for a lodging and warm bath; that is, mere warm water: *that*, you know, could not be had in *Lincolnshire*! She said it was made either too hot or too cold there."

After breakfast, the party paid a visit to the Rev. Mr. Hector M'Lean, a decent ecclesiastic, about seventy-seven years of age, and dressed in a full suit of black clothes, and a black wig, like a Dutch pastor, or one of the "Assembly of Divines" at Westminster. "It was curious," remarks Boswell, "to see him and Dr. Johnson together." Neither of them heard very distinctly, so their conversation was a series of "cross questions and crooked answers." The travellers passed the night at the family seat of the Laird of Col. "Dr.

Johnson and I," says Boswell, "had each an excellent bed-chamber. We had a dispute which of us had the best curtains. His was rather the best, being of linen; but I insisted that my bed had the best posts, which was undeniable. 'Well,' said he, 'if you *have* the best *posts*, we will have you tied to them and whipped.' I mention this slight circumstance, only to shew how ready he is, even in mere trifles, to get the better of his antagonist, by placing him in a ludicrous view. I have known him sometimes use the same art, when hard pressed in serious disputation. Goldsmith applied to him a lively saying in one of Cibber's comedies, which puts this part of his character in a strong light—'There is no arguing with Johnson; for, if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it.' "



CHAPTER IX.

Isle of Mull. Johnson rides a sheltie. Loses his staff. Ulva. Example of second sight. Inchkenneth. Sir Allen M'Lean. Boswell afraid of ghosts. The woods of Mull. Icolmkill. Moy. Johnson's description of his ride to Inverary. His *Meditation on a Pudding*. Duke of Argyll. Boswell snubbed by the Duchess. Rosedow. Glasgow. Auchinleck and its laird. Johnson's altercation with Boswell's father. His consistency. Edinburgh. Two of Johnson's speeches. Johnson returns to London. His opinion that Mrs. Boswell "preferred his room to his company." Boswell's apology for his wife. Johnson's forgiving disposition. He begins his *Journey to the Hebrides*. Death of Goldsmith. Johnson makes a tour through Wales. Writes the *Patriot*. Journey to the Hebrides. Ossian. Johnson's letter to Maepherson. Instances of his resolution. He provides himself with a prodigious club.

At Col the travellers were detained some time by the inclemency of the weather. On the third day of their confinement Johnson became impatient for liberty, and said, "I want to be on the mainland, and go on with existence. This is a waste of life." This was on Friday, Oct. 8th. It was not until the 14th of that month, that, after making one or two abortive efforts to get free, the sage and his companions set sail for Mull. After a pleasant voyage, they entered the harbour of Tobermorie about noon. When they had landed, Johnson remarked, "Boswell is now all alive. He is like Antæus; he gets new vigour whenever he touches the ground." They found a tolerable inn. While in the ship, the Doctor had been out of humour. "A dish of tea, and some good bread and butter," did him service, and his bad temper went off. Boswell told him, that he was diverted to hear all the people whom they had visited in their towns say, "*Honest man!* he's pleased with every thing; he's always content!" adding, "Little do they know." Johnson laughed, and said, "You rogue!"

Before night the tourists removed from the hostelrie to the house of Dr. Alexander M'Lean, a physician (whose wife was the young Laird of Col's aunt), and stayed there till Saturday, Oct. 16th, on which day they had a "very hard journey across the island." Their steeds were the diminutive horses of the place. Boswell had no bridle, but only a halter. At one spot, a loch having swelled over the road, they were obliged to plunge through deep water. Johnson exclaimed that "he longed to get into a *country of saddles and bridles.*" His little sheltie could hardly support the weight of its rider; a circumstance which ruffled his temper, as did also the loss of his large oak walking-stick (of which we made due mention before). "As he preferred riding with a switch," says Boswell, "his staff was intrusted to a fellow to be delivered to our baggage-man, who followed us at some distance; but we never saw it more. I could not persuade him out of a suspicion that it had been stolen. 'No, no, my friend,' said he; 'it is not to be expected that any man in Mull, who has got it, will part with it. Consider, sir, the value of such a *piece of timber* here!'"

They did not arrive at the opposite coast of Mull till seven P.M., though they had set out about eleven in the forenoon. Consequently, they slept at the house of a Mr. M'Quarrie, in the isle of Ulva (which lies between Mull and Inchkenneth), whither they were ferried in the long-boat of an Irish vessel which was lying in the little sound of that island. Their landlord, whom they found to be "intelligent, polite, and much a man of the world," told them a strong instance of the *second sight*. He had gone to Edinburgh, and taken a man-servant along with him. An old woman, who was in the house, said one day, "M'Quarrie will be at home to-morrow, and will bring two gentlemen with him." She also observed that his servant would return in green and red. He did come home next day. He had two gentlemen with him, and his servant had a new green and red livery, which M'Quarrie had bought for him at Edinburgh, upon a sudden thought, not having the least intention when he left home to put his servant in livery; so that the old woman could not have heard any previous mention of it.

Being informed that there was nothing worth inspection at Ulva, they proceeded the next day in a boat to Inchken-

neth, a pretty little island of the most verdant green, a mile long, and about half a mile broad,¹ where they were introduced by the Laird of Col to the chief of his clan, Sir Allan M'Lean, and to two young ladies, his daughters. As they walked up from the shore, Johnson's heart was cheered by the sight of a road marked with cart-wheels, as on the mainland ; a thing which he had^{*} not beheld for a long time. Sir Allan and his visitors soon became intimate : and Johnson shewed so much of the spirit of a Highlander,² that the baronet conceived a great regard for him. In the evening, Sir Allan informed them that it was his custom to have prayers every Sunday. Miss M'Lean read the vesper service; and Boswell, Ogden's second and ninth sermons on prayer. A ruined chapel stood near the baronet's dwelling, and thither Boswell repaired in the dark to perform his devotions, but came back in haste, *for fear of spectres*. The following day was spent in a visit to a small island adjoining Inchkenneth, "and," says Boswell, "in such social and gay entertainments as our little society could furnish." After breakfast, the next morning, Johnson and Boswell took leave of the ladies and their excellent companion the young laird, who has been so frequently mentioned. A year after, he unfortunately perished between Ulva and Mull, just opposite to the house of M'Quarrie ; the boat in which he was being swamped by the intoxication of the sailors, who had partaken too largely of that gentleman's wonted hospitality.

Sir Allan M'Lean embarked with the tourists, in a strong good boat with four stout rowers, for Icolmkill. Anxious for the honour of Mull, the baronet, as they sailed along, talked of its woods, and pointed them out to Johnson, as appearing at a distance on the skirts of that island. "Sir," said the Doctor, "I saw at Tobermorie what they called a wood, which I unluckily took for *heath*. If you shew me

¹ It is now uninhabited. The ruins of the huts—for they were nothing better—in which Johnson was received by Sir Allan, were visible when Sir Walter Scott visited the island.

² Boswell adds: "Indeed, he has shewn it during the whole of our tour. One night, in Col, he strutted about the room with a broad sword and target, and made a formidable appearance ; and, another night, I took the liberty to put a large blue bonnet on his head. His age, his size, and his bushy grey wig, with this covering on it, presented the image of a venerable *Senachi* ; and, however unfavourable to the Lowland Scots, he seemed much pleased to assume the appearance of an ancient Caledonian."

what I shall take for *furze*, it will be some thing." It was night ere they reached the strand of Icolmkill, and descried the tower of its ruined cathedral. The boat could not be brought close to the shore, so Sir Allan and Boswell submitted to be carried on men's shoulders from thence to the strand; but Johnson sprang into the sea, and waded vigorously out. When they had landed on the sacred isle, the Doctor and Boswell embraced. Their feelings have been forcibly expressed in the words of the former, as follows:

"We were now treading that illustrious island, which was the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!"¹

They passed the night in a large barn. Their beds were composed of hay. Each slept in his clothes, and had a portmanteau for a pillow. Early the next morning, they surveyed the remains of ecclesiastical antiquity around them; and, setting sail at noon, landed in the evening at Mull, near the house of a Presbyterian preacher, named Neil Macleod, by whom they were very agreeably entertained. At breakfast on the day following, Sir Allan bragged that Scotland had the advantage of England by its having more water. "Sir," said Johnson, "we would not have your water, to take the vile bogs which produce it. You have too much! A man who is drowned has more water than either of us;" and then he laughed, and proceeded: "Your country consists of two things,—stone and water. There is, indeed, a little earth

¹ *A Journey, &c., pp. 501, 502.*

above the stone in some places, but a very little ; and the stone is always appearing. It is like a man in rags ; the naked skin is still peeping out."

After a very long and tedious ride through a most gloomy and desolate country, they arrived, between seven and eight o'clock P.M., at Moy, the seat of the Laird of Lochbay, whom Boswell describes as a bluff, comely, noisy old gentleman, proud of his hereditary consequence, and a very hearty and hospitable landlord. On Friday, October 22, they parted from him and Sir Allan on the shore of Mull, and trusting themselves to a ferry-boat, of which the bottom was strewed with branches of trees or bushes, they reached the mainland in the evening, and put up at Oban, where they found a tolerable inn. Johnson's description of their ride thence to Inverary is too graphic and animated to be omitted. "On the next day," he relates, "we began our journey southwards. The weather was tempestuous. For half the day the ground was rough, and our horses were still small. Had they required much restraint, we might have been reduced to difficulties ; for I think we had amongst us but one bridle. We fed the poor animals liberally, and they performed their journey well. In the latter part of the day we came to a firm and smooth road, made by the soldiers, on which we travelled with great security, busied with contemplating the scene about us. The night came on while we had yet a great part of the way to go, though not so dark but that we could discern the cataracts which poured down the hills on one side, and fell into one general channel that ran with great violence on the other. The wind was loud, the rain was heavy, and the whistling of the blast, the fall of the shower, the rush of the cataracts, and the roar of the torrent, made a nobler chorus of the rough music of nature than it had ever been my chance to hear before. The streams which ran across the way from the hills to the main current were so frequent, that after a while I began to count them ; and in ten miles reckoned fifty-five, probably missing some, and having let some pass before they forced themselves on my notice. At last we came to Inverary, where we found an inn, not only commodious but magnificent."¹

Dr. Johnson's clothes were thoroughly wet on his arrival

¹ *A Journey, &c., pp. 514, 515.*

at the above hotel, but he would not change them. The travellers made an excellent supper; and after it the Rambler called for a gill of whisky, exclaiming, "Come, let me know what it is that makes a Scotchman happy!" The next day was Sunday, and they spent the forenoon "calmly and placidly." Johnson wanted books, and upon inquiring if there were any in the house, Hervey's *Meditations* were brought to him. He ridiculed this once-popular work, and then amused himself by dictating to Boswell the following

"MEDITATION ON A PUDDING.

"Let us seriously reflect of what a pudding is composed. It is composed of flour that once waved in the golden grain, and drank the dews of the morning; of milk pressed from the swelling udder by the gentle hand of the beauteous milk-maid, whose beauty and innocence might have recommended a worse draught; who, while she stroked the udder, indulged no ambitious thoughts of wandering in palaces, formed no plans for the destruction of her fellow-creatures,—milk, which is drawn from the cow, that useful animal that eats the grass of the field, and supplies us with that which made the greatest part of the food of mankind in the age which the poets have agreed to call golden. It is made with an egg, that miracle of nature, which the theoretical Burnet has compared to creation. An egg contains water within its beautiful smooth surface; and an unformed mass, by the incubation of the parent, becomes a regular animal, furnished with bones and sinews, and covered with feathers. Let us consider: can there be more wanting to complete the meditation on a pudding? If more is wanting, more may be found. It contains salt, which keeps the sea from putrefaction; salt, which is made the image of intellectual excellence, contributes to the formation of a pudding."

The Duke of Argyle resided at Inverary Castle. He had always treated Boswell with civility; but the latter had reason to believe that one of his forensic achievements had given offence to the duke's lady. He was consequently dubious as to whether he ought to call on his grace or not. Johnson decided that he ought; but "was very shy of discovering a desire to be invited there himself." "He insisted," relates

Boswell, "that I should not go to the castle this day before dinner, as it would look like seeking an invitation. 'But,' said I, 'if the duke invites us to dine with him to-morrow, shall we accept?' 'Yes, sir,' I think he said, 'to be sure.' But he added, 'He won't ask us!' I mentioned that I was afraid my company might be disagreeable to the duchess. He treated this objection with a manly disdain: '*That, sir, he must settle with his wife.*'" About the time that he supposed the ladies would have migrated from the dining to the drawing-room, Boswell made his call, and was most politely received by the duke, who was sitting at the head of his table, with several gentlemen. When they rose from their wine, the visitor was conducted into the presence of the duchess, who, although his name was announced by her husband, took not the least notice of him! He was invited by the duke to dine at the castle on the following day, and bring his eminent friend with him. On the morrow, accordingly, Dr. Johnson was duly presented to his grace. The travellers were then shewn over the house, and an indelible impression was made on Boswell's fancy by some of the ladies' maids, "tripping about," to cite his own words, "in neat morning dresses. After seeing," he adds, "for a long time little but rusticity, their lively manner, and gay inviting appearance, pleased me so much, that I thought for the moment I could have been a knight-errant for them." At dinner, Johnson was placed next his noble host. Boswell was in "fine spirits," and did his best to conciliate the duchess by offering her some of the dish that was before him, and drinking her health "audibly, and with a steady countenance." The only remark, however, which she deigned to bestow on him was elicited by one of his, which seemed to imply a belief in *second sight*. She said, "I fancy you will be a *methodist*." Subsequently, when in answer to her inquiry why he made his journey so late in the year, Johnson observed, "Why, madam, you know Mr. Boswell must attend the Court of Session, and it does not rise till the twelfth of August;" she rejoined with some sharpness, "*I know nothing* of Mr. Boswell." "I shall make no remark," writes that personage, "on her grace's speech. I indeed felt it as rather too severe; but when I recollect that my punishment was inflicted by so dignified a beauty, I had that kind of consolation which a man would feel who is

strangled by a *silken cord*." Poor man! probably, to use a vulgar but forcible expression, he had never been so *snubbed* before.

The duke provided Johnson with a "stately steed" from his own stable on the following day, and the travellers proceeded southward over Glencroe, a bleak and dreary region, but made easily passable by a military road, "which," relates the Doctor in his *Journey*, "rises from either end of the glen by an acclivity not dangerously steep, but sufficiently laborious. In the middle, at the top of the hill, is a seat with this inscription, *Rest and be thankful*. Stones were placed to mark the distances, which the inhabitants have taken away, resolved, they said, *to have no new miles*."

From Glencroe they passed through a pleasant country to the banks of Loch Lomond, and were received "with kind and elegant hospitality" at Rosedon, then the seat of Sir James Colquhoun. On the following evening they reached Cameron, from whence, on the next day, they journeyed in a post-chaise to Glasgow. They put up at the Saracen's Head in that beautiful city. Here Johnson, in high glee, placed a leg upon each side of the grate, and said with a mock solemnity, by way of soliloquy, but loud enough to be heard by Boswell, "Here am I, an *Englishman*, sitting by a *coal* fire."

Friday, October 29, was devoted by the tourists to Glasgow, its University and *literati*. "The general impression," writes Boswell, "upon my memory is, that we had not much conversation at Glasgow, where the professors, like their brethren at Aberdeen, did not venture to expose themselves much to the battery of cannon which they knew might play upon them." Upon this passage Sir Walter Scott has facetiously observed: "Boswell himself was callous to the *contacts* of Dr. Johnson; and when telling them, always reminds one of a jockey receiving a kick from the horse which he is shewing off to a customer, and is grinning with pain while he is trying to cry out, 'Pretty rogue,—no vice,—all fun.'"

After dinner on Tuesday, November 2d, the travellers arrived at Auchinleck, the seat of Boswell's father. That gentleman was not quite a year and a half older than Johnson; but his conscientious discharge of his onerous duty as a Scotch judge, and other causes, had in some degree affected

his spirits, and rendered him less disposed than formerly to exert his faculties. He was as stanch a whig and presbyterian,¹ as Johnson was a tory and churchman, and entertained so partial and unfavourable an opinion of the English luminary, as usually to call him "*a Jacobite fellow.*" "Knowing all this," says his son, "I should not have ventured to bring them together, had not my father, out of kindness to me, desired me to invite Dr. Johnson to his house."

Anxious that nothing should occur to mar the sociability of the old gentleman, Boswell conjured his Mentor by all the ties of regard, and in requital of the services he had rendered him upon his tour, that he would avoid two topics in tenderness to his father's prejudices; the first related to Sir John Pringle, president of the Royal Society, about whom there was then some dispute current; the second concerned the general question of Whig and Tory. "I shall certainly not talk on subjects which I am told are disagreeable to a gentleman under whose roof I am; especially, I shall not do so to *your father*," was the courteous reply. The first day of the visit went off very smoothly. It was spent for the most part in the library of Auchinleck. Boswell's parent was a scholar, and the Doctor and he had much matter for conversation without touching on the points of difference. The second day was wet throughout; but Johnson being well accommodated, and furnished with a variety of books, was not dissatisfied. Thursday, November 4, proved very fine, and Boswell had the satisfaction of shewing his venerable friend "the place of his family." Johnson clambered among the ruins of the old castle of Auchinleck, the "sullen dignity" of which delighted him exceedingly. As the sage and his admirer wandered together in the neighbouring groves, the latter said to his companion, that, if he survived him, it was his intention to erect a monument to him there. With that aversion

¹ "This," says Sir Walter Scott, "did not prevent his being a terribly proud aristocrat; and great was the contempt which he entertained and expressed for his son James, for the nature of his friendships, and the character of the personages of whom he was *engoué* one after another. 'There's nae hope for Jamie, mon,' he said to a friend; 'Jamie is gaen clean gytie. What do you think, mon? He's done wi' Paoli—he's off wi' the land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican; and whose tail do you think he has pinned himself to now, mon?' Here the old judge summoned up a sneer of most sovereign contempt: 'A *dominie*, mon—an auld dominie; he keeped a schule, and cau'd it an acaadamy!'"

to the mention of death in any shape, which characterised Johnson, he turned off the subject, saying, "Sir, I hope to see your grandchildren."

Notwithstanding all Boswell's care, his father and the Doctor had a violent contention before the termination of Johnson's visit. Charles the Martyr and his murderer furnished the subject-matter of the discussion, which ended in Johnson's pressing on the old judge the question, what good Cromwell had ever done to his country. "Doctor!" exclaimed Lord Auchinleck, "he gart kings ken that they had a *lith* in their neck,"—he taught kings they had a *joint* in their necks. Boswell then mediated between his father and the philosopher; and availing himself of the judge's sense of hospitality, which was punctilious, reduced the debate to more order and propriety.

On Monday, November 8th, the judge, "who," his son remarks, "had the dignified courtesy of an old baron," escorted the travellers to the post-chaise which was to convey them to Edinburgh; at which city they arrived on the 9th, after an absence of eighty-three days.

Johnson remained at the Scotch metropolis till the 22d of November. During this sojourn he was hospitably feasted by the nobility, gentry, and sages of the "gude city" and its environs; and on the mornings when he breakfasted at home, he had, from ten o'clock till one or two, a constant levee of various persons of very different characters and descriptions. "I could not attend him," says Boswell, "being obliged to be in the Court of Session; but my wife was so good as to devote the greater part of the morning to the endless task of pouring out tea for my friend and his visitors."

Two of Dr. Johnson's speeches at this period shall be inserted here. On one occasion, when he and Boswell were out at supper, the latter happened to say, that one evening a number of years before, when he was sitting in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, "in a wild freak of youthful extravagance, he entertained the audience *prodigiously* by imitating the lowing of a cow." A little while after he had told this story, he ventured to make some observation which was opposed to the opinion of the lexicographer, who instantly exclaimed, "Nay, sir, if you cannot talk better as a man, I'd have you bellow like a cow!"

At another time he observed, “It is advantageous to an author that his book should be attacked as well as praised. Fame is a shuttlecock : if it be struck only at one end of the room, it will soon fall to the ground. To keep it up, it must be struck at both ends.”

The Doctor journeyed by coach to England. In a letter to Boswell, dated November 27, 1773, he says, “I came home last night without any incommodity, danger, or weariness ; and am ready to begin a new journey. I shall go to Oxford on Monday. I know Mrs. Boswell wished me well to go,—her wishes have not been disappointed.”

It appears that Johnson’s opinion that Mrs. Boswell preferred “his room to his company” was not groundless. “The truth is,” apologises her husband, “that his irregular hours and uncouth habits—such as turning the candles with their heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet—could not but be disagreeable to a lady. Besides, she had not that high admiration of him which was felt by most of those who knew him ; and what was very natural to a female mind, she thought he had too much influence over her husband. She once, in a little warmth, made, with more point than justice, this remark upon that subject: ‘I have seen many a bear led by a man ; but I never before saw a man led by a bear.’”

Johnson’s forgiving disposition was strongly tested on his return to London, by a liberty which Davies the bookseller had taken in his absence, of publishing two volumes, entitled *Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces, by the author of the Rambler*; in which collection were several of the Doctor’s anonymous writings, and others in which he had no concern whatever. He was at first very angry ; but soon relented, and continued to treat his old friend with his former kindness.

He began the year 1774 with the following observation on its predecessor : “This year has passed with so little improvement, that I doubt whether I have not rather impaired than increased my learning.” We have cited his description of the scene in which he determined upon writing an account of his travels in the Hebrides. To this work he now diligently addressed himself. In a letter to his friend Langton,

dated July 5, he thus refers to the decease of Dr. Goldsmith, which had recently taken place :

"He died of a fever, exasperated, as I believe, by the fear of distress. He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. But let not his frailties be remembered—he was a very great man."

On the day that the above was put on paper, Johnson set out with the Thrales on a tour through Wales. His diary of this excursion was preserved by his black servant, Barber, and has been published; but it does not contain much that is particularly interesting, or characteristic of its author.

In this journey Dr. Johnson passed two days at the seat of Colonel Middleton, of Gwynagag. While he remained there, the gardener caught a hare amidst some potato-plants, and brought it to his master, then engaged in conversation with the Doctor. An order was given to carry it to the cook. As soon as Johnson heard this sentence, he begged to have the animal placed in his arms: which was no sooner done, than, approaching the window, then half open, he restored the hare to her liberty, shouting after her to accelerate her speed. "What have you done?" cried the colonel; "why, Doctor, you have robbed my table of a delicacy, perhaps deprived us of a dinner." "So much the better, sir," was Johnson's humane reply: "for if your table is to be supplied at the expense of the laws of hospitality, I envy not the appetite of him who eats it. This, sir, is not a hare *feræ naturæ*, but one which had placed itself under your protection; and savage indeed must be that man who does not make his hearth an asylum for the confiding stranger." Connected with Johnson's Welsh excursion is another characteristic anecdote: "One day at dinner," relates Mrs. Piozzi, "I meant to please Mr. Johnson particularly with a dish of very young peas. 'Are not they charming?' said I to him while he was eating them. 'Perhaps,' said he, 'they would be so—to a pig.'"

He returned to London on the 20th of September—an event of which he informed Boswell on the following day, adding :

"I have been in five of the six counties of North Wales, and have seen St. Asaph and Bangor, the two seats of their bishops; have been upon Penmaenmaur and Snowdon, and crossed over into Anglesea. But Wales is so little different from England, that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveller."

At the close of the summer of 1774 Parliament was dissolved. Wishing to support Mr. Thrale at the following general election, Johnson wrote a short political pamphlet, entitled the *Patriot*, and addressed to the electors of Great Britain; in which he portrayed a real patriot, in the original and genuine meaning of that much-perverted word:—a sincere, steady, rational, and unbiassed friend to the interests and prosperity of his king and country. On November 26th he informed Boswell, "Last night I corrected the last page of our *Journey to the Hebrides*." "This work," to cite the words of his fellow-traveller, "abounds in extensive philosophical views of society, and in ingenious sentiment and lively description. A considerable part of it, indeed, consists of speculations, which, many years before he saw the wild regions which we have visited together, probably had employed his attention; though the actual sight of those scenes undoubtedly quickened and augmented them. Mr. Orme, the very able historian, agreed with me in this opinion, which he thus strongly expressed: 'There are in the book thoughts which, by long revolution in the great mind of Johnson, have been formed and polished like pebbles rolled in the ocean.'"

Johnson has been censured for entertaining an undue prejudice against the country and people of Scotland. In the printed journal of his tour, however, it has been justly remarked, "there is nothing that a fair or liberal Scotchman can or does complain of." He has treated Scotland no worse than he did even his best friends, whose characters he used to give as they appeared to him, both in light and shade; and his compliments to individual Scotchmen are judicious, elegant, and well-conceived, and express the sense of gratitude proportioned to the favours he experienced. Of the many criticisms, favourable and the reverse, which have been offered upon Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*, there exists not, we believe, a more correct or impartial one than

that which is comprised in the following remarks, by one of Boswell's fellow-countrymen and correspondents:

"Upon the whole, the book cannot displease, for it has no pretensions. The author neither says he is a geographer, nor an antiquary, nor very learned in the history of Scotland, nor a naturalist, nor a fossilist. The manners of the people, and the face of the country, are all he attempts to describe, or seems to have thought of. Much were it to be wished, that they who have travelled into more remote, and of course more curious regions, had all possessed his good sense. Of the state of learning, his observations on Glasgow University shew he has formed a very sound judgment."

Very different from the above were the sentiments of many North Britons, who attacked Johnson with rancorous violence, on account of his supposed injurious treatment of their country and its inhabitants. All their assaults, however, only furnished amusement for the party assailed; and one of their missiles—"a scurrilous volume, larger than Johnson's own, and filled with malignant abuse"—but elicited from him the following "pleasant" observation: "This fellow must be a blockhead. They don't know how to go about their abuse. Who will read a five-shilling book against me? No, sir; if they had wit, they should have kept pelting me with pamphlets."

It may here be remarked, that one portion of his '*Journey*' drew down upon him, not merely vituperative language, but a menace of another kind of castigation. We have omitted to record that, during his stay in the Hebrides, Johnson was very industrious in his inquiries respecting the Gaelic language, with a view to ascertain the degree of credit due to certain poems then lately published, and ascribed to Ossian, an ancient bard, who, till then, had scarcely been heard of. The result of his investigations was, a persuasion that the effusions in question were little else than a forgery. It was this opinion, strongly and unequivocally expressed in the narrative of his tour, which gave rise to the event above mentioned; for no sooner did it appear, than Mr. James Maepherson, the publisher of the poems, threatened Johnson with personal chastisement. He little knew the in-

trepidity¹ of the man he thus attempted to intimidate, and who returned him this laconic but spirited answer :

“MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,—I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me, I shall do my best to repel ; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

“What would you have me retract ? I thought your book an imposture—I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy ; your abilities, since your ‘Homer,’ are not so formidable ; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

SAM. JOHNSON.”

Whether Johnson, remarks one of his biographers, was apprehensive that his adversary would put his threat in execution, or that he meant to shew all who came to see him that he stood upon his guard, he provided himself with a weapon, both of the defensive and offensive kind. It was an oak-plant of a tremendous size,—a plant, and not a shoot or

¹ No man, says Boswell, was ever more remarkable for personal courage. He had, indeed, an awful dread of death, or rather, “of something after death ;” but his fear was from reflection—the result of philosophical and religious consideration ; his courage natural. He feared death, but he feared nothing else, not even what might occasion death. Many instances of Johnson’s resolution may be mentioned. One day, at Mr. Beauclerk’s house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated ; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven, and fired it off against a wall. Mr. Langton told Boswell, that when he and Johnson were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned the latter against a pool which was reckoned particularly dangerous ; upon which he directly swam into it. One night Johnson was attacked in the street by four men, whom he kept at bay till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the round-house. Foote, the comedian, had resolved to imitate Johnson on the stage, expecting great profits from the ridicule of so celebrated a man. Johnson being informed of his intention, and being at dinner with Davies the bookseller, inquired “what was the common price of an oak stick ?” and being answered six-pence, “Why then, sir,” said he, “give me leave to send your servant to purchase a shilling one. I’ll have a double quantity ; for I am told Foote means to *take me off*, as he calls it ; and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity.” Davies took care to acquaint Foote of this, which effectually checked the wantonness of the mimic.

branch; for it had a root, which, being trimmed to the size of a large orange, became the head of it. Its height was upwards of six feet; and from about an inch in diameter at the lower end, increased to near three. This he kept in his bed-chamber, so near the chair in which he constantly sat as to be within reach. This precaution turned out to be unnecessary. The above letter put an end to the dispute between Johnson and Macpherson; but by other persons it was continued for a long time with great asperity.



CHAPTER X.

Johnson visits Oxford. Publishes *Taxation no Tyranny*. Receives the diploma of Doctor of Laws from Oxford. His opinion of Charles II., James II., and George I. Patriotism. Happiness. Johnson fasts on Good Friday. Extracts from his private register. His breakfast apparatus. Alchymy. Johnson makes his annual ramble to the middle counties. He goes to France. Fontainebleau. Paris. English Benedictines. Indelicacy of the French. Boswell arrives in London. Boswell accompanies Johnson to Oxford. Pembroke College. English Inns. Birmingham. Church festivals. Lichfield. Mr. Jackson. Instance of Johnson's humanity. His letter to Mrs. Thrale on the death of her son. Ashbourne. Dr. Taylor. Dr. Butler. Extracts from Johnson's *Prayers and Meditations*. Gloomy penitence. The *Spectator*. Johnson goes to Bath and Bristol. Rowley's poetry. Thomas Chatterton. St. Mary, Redcliff. Johnson returns to London. Dines with John Wilkes. Foote. Scotland and Boswell.

IN March 1775 Johnson paid a short visit to Oxford. On the 7th of that month he published a pamphlet, entitled *Taxation no Tyranny ; an Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress* : in which he ably refuted the arguments by which our American colonists endeavoured to justify that rebellion which issued in their national independence. Boswell arrived in London on the 21st of March. A few days after, Johnson received from the University of Oxford the diploma of Doctor of Laws. He was highly pleased with this new dignity ; but it is remarkable that he never appears to have assumed his title of Doctor, but called himself Mr. Johnson. "I once," says Boswell, "observed on his table a letter directed to him with the addition of Esquire, and objected to it as being a designation inferior to that of Doctor ; but he checked me, and seemed pleased with it ; because, as I conjectured, he liked to be sometimes taken

out of the class of literary men, and be merely genteel—*un gentilhomme comme un autre.*"

On Thursday, April 6th, the sage and his disciple dined together at Mr. Davies's, on which occasion Johnson expressed himself in the following Jacobitical strain : " Charles II. was licentious in his practice, but he always had a reverence for what was good. Charles II. knew his people, and rewarded merit. The church was at no time better filled than in his reign. He was the best king we have had, from his time till the reign of his present Majesty, except James II., who was a very good king, but unhappily believed that it was necessary for the salvation of his subjects that they should be Roman Catholics. *He* had the merit of endeavouring to do what he thought was for the salvation of the souls of his subjects, till he lost a great empire. *We*, who thought we should *not* be saved if we were Roman Catholics, had the merit of maintaining our religion at the expense of submitting ourselves to the government of King William (for it could not be done otherwise)—to the government of one of the most worthless scoundrels that ever existed. No; Charles II. was not such a man as George II. He did not destroy his father's will. He took money, indeed, from France ; but he did not betray those over whom he ruled—he did not let the French fleet pass ours. George I. knew nothing, and desired to know nothing ; did nothing, and desired to do nothing ; and the only good thing that is told of him is, that he wished to restore the crown to its hereditary successor."

Boswell dined with his venerable friend at General Oglethorpe's on the Monday following, when Johnson enlarged upon Pope's melancholy observation,

" Man never *is*, but always *to be blest.*"

He asserted that *the present* was never a happy state to any human being ; but that, as every part of life of which we are conscious, was at some point of time a period yet to come, in which felicity was expected, there was some happiness produced by hope. Being pressed upon this subject, and asked if he really was of opinion that, though in general happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered, " Never, but when he is drunk."

We are told by Mrs. Piozzi that Johnson did not like any one who said they were happy, or who said any one else was so. "It was all *cant*," he would cry; "the dog knows he is miserable all the time." A friend whom he loved exceedingly told him on one occasion, notwithstanding, that his wife's sister was *really* happy; and called upon the lady to confirm his assertion; which she did with an accent and manner capable of offending the Doctor, if her position had not been sufficient, without any thing more, to put him in a very ill humour. "If your sister-in-law is really the contented being she professes herself, sir," said he, "her life gives the lie to every research of humanity; for she is happy without health, without beauty, without money, and without understanding."

"On Friday, April 14, being Good Friday," relates Boswell, "I repaired to him in the morning, according to my usual custom on that day, and breakfasted with him. I observed that he fasted so very strictly, that he did not even taste bread, and took no milk with his tea—I suppose because it is a kind of animal food."

The following record, in reference to this and the ensuing day, occurs in Johnson's private register:

"Good Friday, April 14, 1775. Boswell came in before I was up. We breakfasted; I only drank tea, without milk or bread. We went to church; saw Dr. Wetherell¹ in the pue, and, by his desire, took him home with us. He did not go very soon; and Boswell stayed. Boswell and I went to church, but came very late. We then took tea, by Boswell's desire; and I eat one bun, I think, that I might not seem to fast ostentatiously. Boswell sat with me till night; we had some serious talk. When he went, I gave Francis some directions for preparation to communicate. Thus has passed, hitherto, this awful day.

"10^h 30^m P.M. When I look back upon resolutions of improvement and amendment, which have year after year been made and broken, either by negligence, forgetfulness, vicious idleness, casual interruption, or morbid infirmity; when I find that so much of my life has stolen unprofitably away, and that I can descry, by retrospection, scarcely a few

¹ Master of University College, Oxford.

single days properly and vigorously employed : why do I yet try to resolve again ? I try, because reformation is necessary, and despair is criminal. I try, in humble hope of the help of GOD.

" Easter Eve, April 15, 1775. I rose more early than is common. . . . I prayed ; but my mind was unsettled, and I did not fix upon the book. After the bread and tea, I trifled ; and about three ordered coffee and buns for my dinner. I find more faintness and uneasiness in fasting than formerly. While coffee was preparing, Collier came in, a man whom I had not seen for more than twenty years. . . . We talked of old friends and past occurrences, and eat and drank together. I then read a little in the Testament, and tried Fiddes's *Body of Divinity*, but did not settle. I then went to evening prayer, and was tolerably composed."

Between the above date and the 23d of May, on which day he left town for Scotland, Boswell's notes on Johnson's conversation, &c. are scanty and uninteresting. From this charge, however, we must except the following memorandum : " On Saturday, May 13, I breakfasted with him by invitation, accompanied by Mr. Andrew Crosbie, a Scotch advocate, whom he had seen at Edinburgh, and the Hon. Colonel (now General) Edward Stopford, brother to Lord Courtown, who was desirous of being introduced to him. His tea, and rolls and butter, and whole breakfast apparatus were all in such decorum, and his behaviour was so courteous, that Colonel Stopford was quite surprised, and wondered at his having heard so much said of Johnson's slovenliness and roughness. I have preserved nothing of what passed, except that Crosbie pleased him much, by talking learnedly of alchymy ; as to which Johnson was not a positive unbeliever, but rather delighted in considering what progress had actually been made in the transmutation of metals—what near approaches there had been made to the making of gold ; and told us that it was affirmed that a person in the Russian dominions had discovered the secret, but died without revealing it, as imagining it would be prejudicial to society. He added, that it was not impossible but it might in time be generally known."

In the latter part of May, Dr. Johnson set out on what he termed " his annual ramble to the middle counties." He

writes to Mrs. Thrale, in a letter dated Oxford, June 1 : “Don’t suppose that I live here as we live at Streatham. I went this morning to the chapel at six ; and if I were to stay, would try to conform to all wholesome rules.”

He returned to London in August ; and on the 15th of the following month left it for France, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. This was the only time in his life that he went upon the continent. By a note in his diary, it appears that he laid out nearly thirty pounds in clothes¹ for his journey. It is to be regretted that he did not write any account of this excursion. One small paper book, containing a “diurnal register” of his life and observations abroad, from the 10th of October to the 4th of November, has been preserved ; and exhibits such an ardour of inquiry and acuteness, as are found but in few travellers, especially at an advanced age. The notes or minutes, however, of which this journal consists are very short, and evidently written merely to assist Johnson’s own recollection. They are, consequently, devoid of interest sufficient to entitle them to a place in this biography. In a letter written from Paris to his humble friend Mr. Richard Levett, the Doctor observes :

“ We came yesterday from Fontainebleau, where the court is now. We went to see the king and queen at dinner ; and

¹ “ His garb and mode of dressing, if it could be called dressing,” says Sir John Hawkins, “ had long been so inflexibly determined, as to resist all the innovations of fashion. His friends had therefore great difficulty in persuading him to such a compliance in this respect as might serve to keep them in countenance, and secure him from the danger of ridicule : he yielded to their remonstrances so far as to dress in a suit of black, and a bourgeois wig, but resisted their importunities to wear ruffles.” “ It happened,” remarks Boswell, “ that Foote was at Paris at the same time with Dr. Johnson, and his description of my friend while there was abundantly ludicrous. He told me, that the French were quite astonished at his figure and manner, and at his dress, which he obstinately continued exactly as in London ;—his brown clothes, black stockings, and plain shirt. He mentioned that an Irish gentleman said to Johnson, ‘ Sir, you have not seen the best French players.’ Johnson. ‘ Players, sir ! I look on them as no better than creatures set upon tables and joint-stools to make faces and produce laughter, like dancing dogs.’ ‘ But, sir, you will allow that some players are better than others ? ’ J. ‘ Yes, sir, as some dogs dance better than others.’ ” It appears, from the statement of Sir John Hawkins, that Johnson did make *some* alterations in his dress at Paris. In the lexicographer’s journal, also, is a memorandum about white stockings, wig, and hat ; and in another place we are informed that “ during his travels in France he was furnished with a French-made wig of handsome construction.”

the queen was so impressed by Miss [Thrale], that she sent one of the gentlemen to inquire who she was. I find all true that you have ever told me of Paris. Mr. Thrale is very liberal, and keeps us two coaches, and a very fine table; but I think our cookery very bad. Mrs. Thrale got into a convent of English nuns, and I talked with her through the grate, and I am very kindly used by the English Benedictine friars. But upon the whole, I cannot make much acquaintance here; and though the churches, palaces, and some private houses are very magnificent, there is no very great pleasure, after having seen many, in seeing more; at least the pleasure, whatever it be, must some time have an end, and we are beginning to think when we shall come home."

Johnson, subsequently, in conversation, repeated the above statement of his inability to make acquaintance with the Parisians, adding, "I spoke only in Latin,¹ and I could not have much conversation. There is no good in letting the French have a superiority over you every word you speak." We are told that it was one of his maxims, "That a man should not let himself down by speaking a language which he speaks imperfectly;" and that when Sir Joshua Reynolds, at one of the dinners of the Royal Academy, presented him to a Frenchman of great distinction, he would not deign to speak French, but talked Latin, though his excellency did not understand it, owing, perhaps, to Johnson's English pronunciation; yet, upon another occasion, he was observed to speak French to a Frenchman of high rank, who spoke English; and being asked the reason, with some expression of surprise, he answered, "Because I think my French is as good as his English."

The following extract is made from a letter indited by Johnson to Miss Lucy Porter, a few days after his return from the continent:

"Nov. 16, 1775.—This week I came home from Paris. . . . Paris is not so fine a place as you would expect. The palaces and churches, however, are very splendid and magnificent; and, what would please you, there are many fine

¹ Boswell says that Johnson "spoke Latin with wonderful fluency and elegance."

pictures ; but I do not think their way of life commodious or pleasant."

This concluding remark accords with the Doctor's observations to Boswell in the next year. "The great in France," he said, "live magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean ; the meat in the markets is such as would be sent to a gaol in England ; and Mr. Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity ; for they could not eat their meat unless they added some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people ; they will spit upon any place. At Madame's [Du Bocage], a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside ; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea à l'*Anglaise*. The spout of the teapot did not pour freely ; she bade the footman to blow into it.¹ France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate. Nature has done more for the French, but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done."

Boswell arrived in London on Friday, March 15th, 1776. He hastened the next morning to pay his respects to Dr. Johnson, and found that the latter had removed from Johnson's Court, No. 7, to Bolt Court, No. 8, and was then at Mr. Thrale's in the Borongh. Thither Boswell repaired, and was kindly welcomed. Johnson in a moment was in a full glow of conversation ; "and I felt myself," says his admirer, "elevated as if brought into another state of being. Mrs. Thrale and I looked to each other while he talked, and our looks expressed our congenial admiration and affection."

On the 19th of March, Boswell and his venerable friend left the Somerset Coffeehouse in the Strand, by coach, "on a jaunt" to Oxford, Birmingham, Lichfield, and Dr. Taylor's, at Ashbourne, Derbyshire. Upon their arrival at the first of the above places, they were disappointed on finding that

¹ Miss Reynolds relates, on the authority of Baretti who was present, that Madame Bocage herself "caught up the teapot, and blew into the spout with all her might ; then finding it pour, she held it up in triumph, and repeatedly exclaimed, ' Voilà, voilà, j'ai regagné l'honneur de ma théière ! ' "

Mr. Scott, who, it will be remembered, accompanied Johnson from Newcastle to Edinburgh, was gone into the country. Next morning they walked with Dr. Adams into the common room of Pembroke College. “Ah!” exclaimed Johnson, after a reverie of meditation, “here I used to play at draughts with Phil. Jones and Fludyer. Jones loved beer, and did not get very forward in the church. Fludyer turned out a scoundrel,¹ a whig, and said he was ashamed of having been bred at Oxford. He had a living at Putney, and got under the eye of some retainers to the court at that time, and so became a violent whig; but he had been a scoundrel all along, to be sure.” “Was he a scoundrel, sir,” inquired Boswell, “in any other way than that of being a political scoundrel? Did he cheat at draughts?” “Sir,” was Johnson’s reply, “we never played for *money*.”

They quitted Oxford on the 21st, in a post-chaise, drove through Blenheim Park, and dined at an inn at Capelhouse; where Johnson expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. “There is no private house,” said he, “in which people enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy,—in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man’s house as in his own. Whereas at taverns there is a general freedom from anxiety: you are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity

¹ “It may be observed,” writes Boswell, “that he used the epithet *scoundrel*, very commonly, not quite in the sense in which it is generally understood, but as a strong term of disapprobation; as when he abruptly answered Mrs. Thrale, who had asked him how he did, ‘Ready to become a scoundrel, madam; with a little more spoiling, you will, I think, make me a complete rascal:’ he meant, easy to become a capricious and self-indulgent valetudinarian; a character for which I have heard him express great disgust.”

which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, sir ; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."

In the afternoon, as they were carried rapidly along, he remarked, "Life has not many things better than this." His extreme fondness for the very act of travelling has been already mentioned.¹

On Saturday, March 22d, they slept at Henley ; and at an early hour the following day arrived at Birmingham. Here they were entertained by a Mr. Lloyd, a quaker, one of whose sect-fellows objected to "the observance of days, and months, and years." Johnson answered, "The Church does not superstitiously observe days merely as days, but as memorials of important facts. Christmas might be kept as well upon one day in the year as another ; but there should be a stated day for commemorating the birth of our SAVIOUR, because there is danger that what may be done on any day will be neglected."

The travellers went on to Lichfield in the evening of March 23d. They journeyed in pensive silence and darkness till they came within the focus of the lamps of that city ; when Johnson remarked, "Now we are getting out of a state of death." They put up at the Three Crowns,—a good old-fashioned inn, and the very next house to that in which the Doctor was born. Next day, Boswell was introduced to Miss Lucy Porter, "now an old maid, with much simplicity of manner." They then visited Peter Garrick, brother of the great actor. "We dined," relates Boswell, "at our inn,

¹ "I asked him," says Mrs. Piozzi, "why he doated on a coach so ? And received for answer, that, 'in the first place, the company was shut in with him *there*, and could not escape as out of a room : in the next place, he heard all that was said in a carriage, where it was my turn to be deaf : and very impatient was he at my occasional difficulty of hearing. On this account he wished to travel all over the world ; for the very act of going forward was delightful to him, and he gave himself no concern about accidents, which he said never happened ; nor did the running away of the horses on the edge of a precipice between Vernon and St. Denys in France convince him to the contrary ; for nothing came of it,' he said, 'except that Mr. Thrale leaped out of the carriage into a chalk-pit, and then came up again, looking *as white* !' When the truth was, all their lives were saved by the greatest providence ever exerted in favour of three human creatures ; and the part Mr. Thrale took from desperation was the likeliest thing in the world to produce broken limbs and death.'

and had with us Mr. Jackson, one of Johnson's schoolfellows, whom he treated with much kindness, though he seemed to be a low man, dull and untaught. He had a coarse grey coat, black waistcoat, greasy leather breeches, and a yellow uncurled wig ; and his countenance had the ruddiness which betokens one who is in no haste to 'leave his can.' He drank only ale. He had tried to be a cutler at Birmingham, but had not succeeded ; and now he lived poorly at home, and had some scheme of dressing leather in a better manner than common ; to his indistinct account of which Dr. Johnson listened with patient attention, that he might assist him with his advice. Here was an instance of genuine humanity and real kindness in this great man, who has been most unjustly represented as altogether harsh and destitute of tenderness. A thousand such instances might have been recorded in the course of his long life ; though that his temper was warm and hasty, and his manner often rough, cannot be denied."

On Monday, March 25th, when breakfasting at Miss Lucy Porter's, Johnson received a letter informing him of the deceasé of the Thrales' only son. After dinner, he wrote the following admirable epistle to the bereaved mother :—

" DEAR MADAM,—This letter will not, I hope, reach you many days before me : in a distress which can be so little relieved, nothing remains for a friend but to come and partake it.

" Poor, dear, sweet little boy ! When I read the letter this day to Mrs. Aston, she said, ' Such a death is the next to translation.' Yet, however I may convince myself of this, the tears are in my eyes ; and yet I could not love him as you loved him, nor reckon upon him for a future comfort as you and his father reckoned upon him.

" He is gone, and we are going ! We could not have enjoyed him long, and shall not long be separated from him. He has probably escaped many such pangs as you are now feeling.

" Nothing remains, but that with humble confidence we resign ourselves to Almighty Goodness, and fall down, without irreverent murmurs, before the Sovereign Distributor of

good and evil, with hope that though sorrow endureth for a night, yet joy may come in the morning.

"I have known you, madam, too long to think that you want any arguments for submission to the Supreme Will; nor can my consolation have any effect, but that of shewing that I wish to comfort you. What can be done, you must do for yourself. Remember, first, that your child is happy; and then, that he is safe, not only from the ills of this world, but from those more formidable dangers which extend their mischief to eternity. You have brought into the world a rational being; have seen him happy during the little life that has been granted to him; and can have no doubt but that his happiness is now.

"When you have obtained by prayer such tranquillity as nature will admit, force your attention, as you can, upon your accustomed duties and accustomed entertainments. You can do no more for our dear boy; but you must not therefore think less on those whom your attention may make fitter for the place to which he is gone. I am, dearest madam, your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

On the succeeding day the tourists were conveyed to Ashbourne in Dr. Taylor's "large roomy post-chaise, drawn by four stout plump horses, and driven by two steady jolly postilions." They found the Doctor living upon an establishment perfectly corresponding with his substantial, "creditable equipage:" his house, garden, pleasure-ground, table, —in short, every thing good, and no scantiness appearing. Dr. Taylor had a good estate of his own, and good preferment in the Church,—being a prebendary of Westminster, and rector of Bosworth. "His size, and figure, and countenance, and manner," says Boswell, "were that of a hearty English squire, with the parson super-induced; and I took particular notice of his upper-servant, Mr. Peters, a decent, grave man, in purple clothes and a large white wig, like the butler or *major-domo* of a bishop."

The old school-fellows met with great cordiality. In the course of conversation, Dr. Taylor commended a physician (Dr. Butter, who attended Johnson in his last illness),

and said, "I fight many battles for him, as many people in the country dislike him." *Johnson.* "But you should consider, sir, that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for every man of whom you get the better will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him; whereas if people get the better of you in argument about him, they'll think, 'We'll send for Dr. Butter, nevertheless.'" This was an observation which displayed his thorough acquaintance with human nature.

After staying a couple of days at Ashbourne, the travellers bent their course back to the metropolis, which they entered on March 28th. *Johnson*, immediately upon his arrival, hurried to Mr. Thrale's in the Borough, and was chagrined at finding the coach at the door, waiting to carry Mrs. and Miss Thrale, and Signor Baretti, their Italian master, to Bath. Although she knew that the sage had hastened from the country on her account, Mrs. Thrale, without ceremony, proceeded on her journey.

In *Johnson's Prayers and Meditations* is the following entry respecting Good Friday, April 5th, 1776:

"Though, for the past week, I have had an anxious desire of communicating to-day, I performed no particular act of devotion, till on Friday I went to church. I fasted, though less rigorously than at other times. I by negligence poured milk into the tea, and, in the afternoon, drank one dish of coffee with Thrale; yet at night, after a fit of drowsiness, I felt myself very much disordered by emptiness, and called for tea, with peevish and impatient eagerness. My distress was very great."

From the same record we learn the state of his mind on the ensuing Easter-day. He writes:

"The time is again [come] at which, since the death of poor dear Tetty, on whom God have mercy, I have commemorated the mystery of redemption, and annually purposed to amend my life. My reigning sin, to which, perhaps, many others are appendant, is waste of time, and general sluggishness, to which I was always inclined, and, in part of my life, have been almost compelled by morbid melancholy and disturbance of mind. Melancholy has had me in its paroxysms and remissions; but I have not improved the intervals, nor sufficiently resisted my natural inclination or

sickly habits. . . . In the morning I had at church some radiations of comfort."

After coffee, on the above festival, Johnson and Boswell went to afternoon service at St. Clement's church. Observing some beggars in the streets as they walked along, the latter said that he supposed there was no civilised country in the world where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people was prevented. "I believe, sir," answered Johnson, "there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality." In the evening, the Doctor and his companion sat quietly by themselves. Upon the question, "whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to force himself into solitude and sadness," Johnson remarked, "No, sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy till, in order to be relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgences."

On Wednesday, April 10th, the Doctor and Boswell met at Mr. Thrale's. Talking of the *Spectator*, Johnson said, "It is wonderful that there is such a proportion of bad papers in the half of the work which was not written by Addison; for there was all the world to write that half, yet not a half of that is half so good. One of the finest pieces in the English language is the paper on 'Novelty';¹ yet we do not hear it talked of. It was written by Grove, a dissenting teacher."

A few days afterwards Johnson went to Bath with the Thrales, and thither Boswell followed him on the 26th of April. On the 29th that gentleman and his Mentor made an excursion to Bristol. They were displeased with their inn at that city. "Let us see now," said the former, "how we should describe it." Johnson was ready with his raillery. "Describe it, sir?" he exclaimed. "Why, it was so bad, that—Boswell wished to be in Scotland!" The Doctor inquired upon the spot into the authenticity of "Rowley's poetry." "George Catcot, the pewterer," relates Boswell, "who was as zealous for Rowley as Dr. Hugh Blair was for

¹ No. 626.

Ossian, attended us to our inn ; and, with a triumphant air of lively simplicity, called out, ‘I’ll make Dr. Johnson a convert.’ Dr. Johnson, at his desire, read aloud some of Chatterton’s fabricated verses;¹ while Cateot stood at the back of his chair, moving himself like a pendulum, and beating time with his feet, and now and then looking into Dr. Johnson’s face, wondering that he was not yet convinced. We called on Mr. Barret, the surgeon, and saw some of the *originals*, as they were called, which were executed very artificially ; but, from a careful inspection of them, and a consideration of the circumstances with which they were attended, we were quite satisfied with the imposture. . . . Honest Cateot seemed to pay no attention whatever to any objections ; but insisted, as an end of all controversy, that we should go with him to the tower of the church of St. Mary, Redcliff, and *view with our own eyes* the ancient chest in which the manuscripts were found. To this Dr. Johnson good-naturedly agreed ; and, though troubled with a shortness of breathing, laboured up a long flight of steps, till he came to the place where the wondrous chest stood. ‘*There*,’ said Cateot, with a bouncing confident credulity ; ‘*there* is the very chest itself.’ After this *ocular demonstration* there was no more to be said. He brought to my recollection a Scotch Highlander, a man of learning too, and who had seen the world, attesting, and at the same time giving his reasons for, the authenticity of Fingal : ‘I have heard all that poem when I was young.’ ‘Have you, sir ? Pray what have you heard ?’ ‘I have heard Ossian, Oscar, and *every one of them*. ’

Johnson said of Chatterton, “ This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It

¹ Thomas Chatterton, whose precocious genius has gained him much celebrity, was born at Bristol in 1752. His father was sexton at the church of St. Mary, Redcliff, in the above city, and young Chatterton professed to have received from him several ancient MSS. These he palmed upon the world as the poems of Rowley, a priest of Bristol in the 15th century ; and so admirably was his forgery executed, that it is even now rather assumed than proved (though there can be little moral doubt of it) that he did forge and not find the MSS. Having vainly endeavoured to persuade Horace Walpole and other scholars of their genuineness, Chatterton became a party writer ; seemingly indifferent which party he wrote for, provided he succeeded in getting paid. Even this resource at length failed him ; and in a state of deep despondency, produced by absolute want, he destroyed himself by poison in 1770.

is wonderful how the whelp has written such things." Of the merit of the poems, admitted on both sides of the controversy, he remarked, "It is a sword which cuts both ways. It is as wonderful that a boy of sixteen years old should have stored his mind with such a strain of ideas and images, as to suppose that such ease of versification and elegance of language were produced by Rowley in the time of Edward the Fourth."

The Doctor returned to town on the 4th of May.

It now devolves upon us to relate a very curious incident in Johnson's life—nothing less than his dining on terms of friendly familiarity with the notorious demagogue John Wilkes—a man of whom his dislike was so great that it extended even to his connexions. Boswell's desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description had made him, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to the lexicographer and the democrat; and he conceived an irresistible wish to bring these personages together. How he accomplished this nice and difficult matter cannot be better related than in his own words: "My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry,—at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds,—had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15. 'Pray,' said I, 'let me have Dr. Johnson.' 'What! with Mr. Wilkes? Not for the world,' said Mr. Edward Dilly; 'Dr. Johnson would never forgive me.' 'Come,' said I; 'if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.' *Dilly.* 'Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.'

"Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.' I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my

plan thus: "Mr. Dilly, sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next, along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland." *Johnson*. "Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly; I will wait upon him." *Boswell*. "Provided, sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have is agreeable to you?" *J.* "What do you mean, sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?" *B.* "I beg your pardon, sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of his patriotic friends with him." *J.* "Well, sir, and what then? What care *I* for his *patriotic friends*? Pooh!" *B.* "I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there." *J.* "And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally." *B.* "Pray forgive me, sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me." Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

"Upon the much-expected Wednesday," continues Boswell, "I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffetting his books, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, sir?' said I; 'don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?' *Johnson*. 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's; it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams.' *Boswell*. 'But, my dear sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.' *J.* 'You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this.'"

Boswell, in much trepidation lest his project should be baulked thus at the eleventh hour, hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her he was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to him to dine that day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told him he had forgotten his

engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. "Yes, sir," said she, rather peevishly; "Dr. Johnson is to dine at home." However, after a deal of persuasion, she empowered Boswell to tell his venerable friend, "That, all things considered, she thought he should certainly go." "I flew back to him," relates Boswell, "still in dust, and careless of what should be the event; 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams's consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon dressed. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him, and set out for Gretna Green."

When they entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, Johnson found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. Boswell kept himself "snug and quiet," watching how the Doctor would behave. He observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, "Who is that gentleman, sir?" "Mr. Arthur Lee." "Too, too, too," (under his breath) was Johnson's answer. Mr. Lee could not but be very obnoxious to him, for he was not only a *patriot*, but an *American*. "And who," he inquired, "is the gentleman in lace?" "Mr. Wilkes, sir." This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself; and, taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat, and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. The cheering sound of "Dinner is upon the table!" dissolved his reverie; and "we all," says Boswell, "sat down without any symptom of ill humour." Wilkes placed himself next to Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than the Doctor, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, sir; it is better here—a little of the brown. Some fat, sir—a little of the stuffing—some gravy. Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter. Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." "Sir, sir, I am obliged to you, sir," cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of "surly virtue," but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said, "He is not a good

mimic." One of the company added, "A merry-andrew, a buffoon." *Johnson*. "But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, sir, when you think you have got him,—like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has got a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. . . . The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, and throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, sir, he was irresistible. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers among his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down stairs he told them, 'This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer.'"

Wilkes remarked, that "among all the bold flights of Shakespeare's imagination, the boldest was making Birnam-wood march to Dunsinane; creating a wood where there

never was a shrub ; a wood in Scotland ! ha ! ha ! ha !” One of the company mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it. “ Why, sir,” said Johnson, “ all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren.” “ Come, come,” remarked Boswell ; “ he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there.” “ Why, yes, sir,” replied Johnson ; “ meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home.” These quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile. “ Upon this topic,” writes Boswell, “ he and Mr. Wilkes could perfectly assimilate ; here was a bond of union between them ; and I was conscious that, as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange narrow ignorance of those who imagine that it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes.” “ You must know, sir,” said Johnson to Wilkes, “ I lately took my friend Boswell, and shewed him genuine civilised life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility ; for you know he lives among savages in Scotland, and among rakes in London.” “ Except,” answered Wilkes, “ when he is with grave, sober, decent people, like you and me.” “ And we,” said Johnson, smiling, “ ashamed of him.”

Throughout the whole of Johnson’s singular interview with the civic demagogue, he was *indeed* what he claimed the credit of being “ a good-humoured fellow.” Boswell attended him home, and had the satisfaction of hearing him tell Mrs. Williams how much he had been pleased with Wilkes’s company, and what an agreeable day he had passed. The following is the Doctor’s own account to Mrs. Thrale of this meeting : “ For my part, I begin to settle, and keep company with *grave aldermen*. I dined yesterday in the Poultry, with Mr. Alderman Wilkes, and Mr. Alderman Lee, and Councillor Lee, his brother. There sat you the while thinking, ‘ What is Johnson doing ? ’ What should he be doing ? He is breaking jokes with Jack Wilkes upon the *Scotch*. Such, madam, are the vicissitudes of things ! ”

The day after this celebrated dinner-party, Boswell took

leave of Johnson for Scotland, "with no great inclination to travel northward." "He carries with him," says the Doctor, in a letter dated "May 18th," "two or three good resolutions; I hope they will not mould on the road."



CHAPTER XI.

Johnson's anxiety to attain higher literary excellence. He spends six weeks at Brighton. Suffers from bodily and mental indisposition. Omits church on Sundays. Engages to write prefaces to an edition of the English Poets. Furnishes the edition of the works of Dr. Pearce with a dedication to George III. Writes a prologue to *A Word to the Wise*. His interference in behalf of Dr. Dodd. His solemn letter to Dodd. His benevolent exertions for Isaac de Groot. Johnson goes to Lichfield and Ashbourne. Small salaries of curates. Johnson's opinion of Dr. Taylor. Derby. Johnson's fondness for post-chaise travelling. London. Johnson foiled by a dead cat. Boswell's affection for Johnson inflamed by sweet sounds. Johnson's love of late hours. He returns to London. Visits Brighton. Johnson's bust by Nollekens. "Bow, wow, wow." Mrs. Desmoulins and Co. The quarrels of Johnson's pensioners. Streatham. Attention to truth. Ghosts. Goldsmith's merit as a writer. Old age. Subordination. Shoeblocks. Johnson's altercation with Dr. Percy. Man's free-agency. John Wesley's ghost-story. A pervert to Quakerism. Fleet Street. Oliver Edwards. The Americans. Boswell's "horrible shock." Johnson's drawing-room. Extract from his *Meditations*. "Wasting a fortune." Johnson's conversation.

DR. JOHNSON'S anxiety to attain still higher degrees of literary excellence appears from the following passage in his Prayers and Meditations:

"July 25, 1776. O GOD, who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect; look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours. Grant me, O LORD, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind, and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come; for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen."

We learn from the note subjoined, that this was composed when he "purposed to apply vigorously to study, particularly of the Greek and Latin tongues." "Such a purpose," re-

marks Boswell, “so expressed, at the age of sixty-seven, is admirable and encouraging; and it must impress all the thinking part of my readers with a consolatory confidence in habitual devotion, when they see a man of such enlarged intellectual powers as Dr. Johnson, thus, in the genuine earnestness of secrecy, imploring the aid of that Supreme Being from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.”

In the autumn of this year, Johnson spent about six weeks at Brighton. In a letter to Boswell he writes :

“The place was very dull; and I was not well. The excursion to the Hebrides was the most pleasant journey that I ever made. Such an effort annually would give the world a little diversification. Every year, however, we cannot wander; and must therefore endeavour to spend our time at home as well as we can. I believe it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment have its hour. Xenophon observes in his *Treatise of Economy*, that if every thing be kept in a certain place, when any thing is worn out or consumed, the vacuity which it leaves will shew what is wanting; so if every part of time has its duty, the hour will call into remembrance its proper engagement. I have not practised all this prudence myself; but I have suffered much for want of it; and I would have you, by timely recollection and steady resolution, escape from those evils which have lain heavy upon me.”

Early in 1777, Johnson suffered severely from bodily and mental indisposition. While under the influence of the latter, he wrote in his private register :

“When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind, very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies.”

His depression at the above period was, however, cheered by intervals of composure, and even gladness; although these were not entirely free from gloom. He writes :

“On Easter-day I was at church early, and there prayed over my prayer,¹ and commended Tetty and my other friends.

¹ “Almighty and most merciful FATHER, who seest all our miseries, and knowest all our necessities; look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep

I was for some time much distressed; but at last obtained, I hope, from the GOD of peace, more quiet than I have enjoyed for a long time. I had made no resolution; but as my heart grew lighter, my hopes revived, and my courage increased. . . . I dined, by an appointment, with Mrs. Gardiner; and passed the afternoon with such calm gladness of mind as it is very long since I felt before. I came home, and began to read the Bible. I passed the night in such sweet, uninterrupted sleep, as I have not known since I slept at Fort Augustus. . . . At the beginning of the year, I proposed to myself a scheme of life, and a plan of study; but neither life has been rectified, nor study followed. Days and months pass in a dream; and I am afraid my memory grows less tenacious, and my observation less attentive. My nights are restless and tedious, and my days drowsy. The flatulence which torments me has sometimes so obstructed my breath, that the act of respiration became not only voluntary but laborious in a recumbent posture. By copious bleeding I was relieved, but not cured.

"I have this year omitted church on most Sundays,¹ intending to supply the deficiency in the week; so that I owe twelve attendances on worship. I will make no more such superstitious stipulations, which entangle the mind with unbidden obligations."

In a letter to Boswell, dated May 3d, he says: "My health

such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which Thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me, by Thy HOLY SPIRIT, that my heart may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found: and that I may serve Thee with pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me, O GOD, have mercy upon me! Years and infirmities oppress me; terror and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my CREATOR and Judge! In all dangers protect me; in all perplexities relieve and free me; and so help me by Thy HOLY SPIRIT, that I may now so commemorate the death of Thy SON our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, as that, when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for His sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen."

¹ "I am convinced," said he to a friend, "I ought to be present at divine service more frequently than I am; but the provocations given by ignorant and affected preachers too often disturb the mental calm which otherwise would succeed prayer. I am apt to whisper to myself on such occasions: How can this illiterate fellow dream of fixing attention, after we have been listening to the sublimest truths, conveyed in the most chaste and exalted language, throughout a liturgy which must be regarded as the genuine offspring of piety impregnated with wisdom! — Take notice, however, though I make this confession respecting myself, I do not mean to recommend the fastidiousness that sometimes leads me to exchange congregational for solitary worship."

is very bad, and my nights are very unquiet. What can I do to mend them? I am engaged to write little lives, and little prefaces, to a little edition of the English Poets."

Such was the limited design which Johnson afterwards expanded into that admirable work, *The Lives of the English Poets*: which has been characterised as "the richest, most beautiful, and, indeed, most perfect production" of his pen. The booksellers left it entirely to the Doctor to name his own terms for this undertaking. He mentioned two hundred guineas: which proposal was immediately accepted. The bargain was made on Easter-eve, 1777. The time it occupied was not long; but we learn from Johnson's Prayers and Meditations that his tender conscience was alarmed, lest it should have intruded too much on his devout preparation for the solemnity of the ensuing day. "But indeed," remarks Boswell, "very little time was necessary for Johnson's concluding a treaty with the booksellers; as he had, I believe, less attention to profit from his labours than any man to whom literature has been a profession."

In the spring of this year was published the posthumous works of Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, prefaced by some account of his life and character, written by himself. To this Johnson made some valuable additions, and also furnished to the editor a dedication to George III. In the summer he wrote a prologue, which was spoken before *A Word to the Wise*, a comedy by Mr. Hugh Kelly; and shews that his poetical talents were in no degree impaired.

We have now arrived at the time of Dr. Johnson's humane and zealous interference in behalf of the Rev. Dr. William Dodd, prebendary of Brecon, and chaplain in ordinary to the king; celebrated as a very popular preacher, an encourager of charitable institutions, and author of a variety of works, chiefly theological. Having unhappily contracted expensive habits of living, partly occasioned by licentiousness of manners, he in an evil hour, when pressed by want of money, and dreading an exposure of his circumstances, forged a bond, of which he attempted to avail himself to support his credit, flattering himself that he might be able to repay its amount without being detected. The person whose name he thus presumed to falsify was the Earl of Chesterfield, to whom he had been tutor, and who he perhaps flattered himself would have

generously paid the money in case of an alarm being taken, rather than suffer him to fall a victim to the dreadful consequences of violating the law against forgery. But in this he was mistaken. His noble pupil appeared against him; and he was capitally convicted.

Dodd was very little acquainted with Johnson, having been but once in his company, many years previously; but in his distress he bethought himself of the Doctor's persuasive power of writing, if haply it might avail to obtain for him the royal mercy. He applied to him through the Countess of Harrington. Mr. Allen, the printer, who was Johnson's landlord and next neighbour in Bolt Court, and a friend of the reverend culprit, carried Lady Harrington's letter to the lexicographer.¹ He read it walking up and down his chamber, and seemed much agitated; after which he said, "I will do what I can." Accordingly, he wrote Dr. Dodd's 'Speech to the Recorder of London,' at the Old Bailey, when sentence of death was about to be pronounced upon him; 'The Convict's Address to his Unhappy Brethren,' a sermon delivered by Dr. Dodd in the chapel of Newgate; three letters—the first to Lord Chancellor Bathurst, the second to Lord Mansfield, and the third to the Right Hon. Charles Jenkinson,² afterwards Earl of Liverpool; a petition from Dr. Dodd to the King; a petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen; observations of some length inserted in the newspapers, on occasion of Earl Percy's having presented to his Majesty a petition for mercy to Dodd, signed by twenty thousand persons, but all in vain; and a petition for the city of London.

All applications for the royal mercy having failed, Dr. Dodd prepared himself for death, and wrote a letter to John-

¹ "He was," says Hawkins, "at Streatham church when Dodd's first application to him was made, and went out of his pew immediately to write an answer to the letter he had received. Afterwards, when he related this circumstance, he added, 'I hope I shall be pardoned, if once I deserted the service of God for that of man.'" Dodd's *first* application, however, was received by Johnson as above related. A letter from Dodd was subsequently brought to him when in church. He stooped down and read it; and afterwards expressed, in the words just cited, his hope that this deviation from the sacred duties of the place would be pardoned.

² Of this application Johnson subsequently said to Miss Seward: "I knew it was a man having no interest writing to a man who had no interest; but I thought with myself, when Dr. Dodd comes to the place of execution, he may say, 'Had Dr. Johnson written in my behalf, I had not been here:' and (*with great emphasis*) I could not bear the thought!"

son, expressive of the warmest gratitude and regard. The following is Johnson's reply :

June 26, 1777.

"Dear sir,—That which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances—the eyes and the thoughts of men—are below the notice of an immortal being, about to stand the trial for eternity, before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime, morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles—it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and reparable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of His Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

In requital for those well-intended offices which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you will make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare. I am, dear sir, your most affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

After reading this solemn letter, the prisoner gave it into the hands of his wife, with a strong injunction never to part with it. He was executed on the next day, in the forty-ninth year of his age.

About this period, Johnson gave another proof of his benevolence to the unfortunate, by his successful exertions to obtain for Isaac Groot (an aged and infirm artist, and a descendant of the great Grotius), whom he had known many years, a refuge in the goodly hospital of St. Cross, Winchester.

In the latter end of July, the Doctor left town for Lichfield; and on the 30th of August arrived at Ashbourne. He immediately, with his host's permission, requested Boswell to meet him there. This invitation was gladly accepted by his Scotch admirer, who had been deterred this year, by family affairs, from making his accustomed journey to the metropolis; and he reached Dr. Taylor's on the evening of September 14th. The next day Johnson carried him to see the garden belonging to the school of Ashbourne; and while they sat

basking in the sun upon a seat there, the latter commented upon the very small salaries frequently given to curates in the Church of England. "To be sure, sir," replied the Doctor, "it is wrong that any clergyman should be without a reasonable income; but as the Church revenues were sadly diminished at the Reformation, the clergy who have livings cannot afford, in many instances, to give good salaries to curates, without leaving themselves too little; and if no curate were to be permitted unless he had a hundred pounds a-year, their number would be very small, which would be a disadvantage, as then there would not be such choice in the nursery for the Church —curates being candidates for the higher ecclesiastical offices, according to their merit and good behaviour. It is not thought fit to trust a man with the care of a parish till he has given proof as a curate that he shall deserve such a trust." This is an excellent theory; it were well if the practice were more in accordance with it.

Of Dr. Taylor, Johnson remarked, "that he had great activity in some respects, and yet such a sort of indolence, that if you should put a pebble upon his chimney-piece, you would find it in the same state a year afterwards." On another occasion he said of the same individual, "Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, 'His talk is of bullocks.' I do not suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical: this he knows that I see; and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation."

On September 19, Johnson and Boswell went to Derby. As they drove rapidly along, the former observed, "If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a postchaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation." Boswell remarked that they were that day to stop just where the Highland army did in 1745. "It was," said Johnson, "a noble attempt." The next day, when conversing with his Mentor after breakfast, Boswell suggested a doubt, that if he were to reside in London, the exquisite zest with which he relished it in occasional visits might go off, and he might grow tired of it. "Why, sir," answered his companion, "you find no man, at all intellectual,

who is willing to leave London. No, sir; when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

During Boswell's visit with Johnson at Ashbourne, the moralist appeared to be more uniformly social, cheerful, and alert than his friend had almost ever seen him. One morning, after breakfast, when the sun shone bright, they walked out together, and "pored" for some time with placid indolence upon an artificial waterfall which Dr. Taylor had made by building a strong dyke of stone across the river behind the garden. "It was now," says Boswell, "somewhat obstructed by branches of trees and other rubbish, which had come down the river and settled close to it. Johnson, partly from a desire to see it play more freely, and partly from that inclination to activity which will animate at times the most inert and sluggish mortal, took a long pole which was lying on a bank, and pushed down several parcels of this wreck with painful assiduity, while I stood quietly by, wondering to behold the sage thus curiously employed, and smiling with a humorous satisfaction each time when he carried his point. He worked till he was quite out of breath; and having found a large dead cat, so heavy that he could not move it after several efforts, 'Come,' said he, throwing down the pole, '*you* shall take it now;' which I accordingly did, and being a fresh man, soon made the cat tumble over the cascade. This may be laughed at, as too trifling to record; but it is a small characteristic trait in the Flemish picture which I give of my friend, and in which, therefore, I mark the most minute particulars. And let it be remembered, that '*Æsop at play*' is one of the instructive analogues of antiquity."

On Thursday evening, September 23d, Taylor and two others entertained themselves and the company with a great number of tunes on the fiddle. Boswell remarked that music affected him to such a degree, as often to agitate his nerves painfully, producing in his mind alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that he was ready to shed tears; and of daring resolution, so that he was inclined to rush into the thickest part of the battle. "Sir," said Johnson, who was very insensible to the sweet sounds, "I should never hear it, if it made me such a fool."

Under the influence of the music, Boswell, notwithstanding-

ing this plain speaking of his preceptor, felt his reverence and affection for him in full glow : and observed, " My dear sir, we must meet every year, if you don't quarrel with me." " Nay, sir," replied Johnson, " you are more likely to quarrel with me than I with you. My regard for you is greater almost than I have words to express ; but I do not choose to be always repeating it : write it down in the first leaf of your pocketbook, and never doubt of it again."

After supper, the Doctor and his admirer sat up for some time in the apartment of the former. At length Boswell expressed a fear that he was detaining Johnson too long from his repose. " No, sir," he answered ; " I don't care though I sit all night with you." This was an animated speech from a man in his sixty-ninth year : but Johnson loved late hours extremely, or more properly hated early ones. Nothing was more terrifying to him than the idea of retiring to bed, which he would never call going to rest, or suffer another to call so. " I lie down," said he, " that my acquaintance may sleep ; but I lie down to endure oppressive misery, and soon rise again to pass the night in anxiety and pain." " By this pathetic manner," relates Mrs. Thrale, " which no one ever possessed in so eminent a degree, he used to shock me from quitting his company, till I hurt my own health not a little by sitting up with him when I was myself far from well : nor was it an easy matter to oblige him even by compliance, for he always maintained that no one forbore their own gratifications for the sake of pleasing another ; and if one *did* sit up, it was probably to amuse one's-self. Some right, however, he certainly had to say so, as he made his company exceedingly entertaining when he had forced one, by his vehement lamentations and piercing reproofs, not to quit the room, but to sit quietly and make tea for him, as I often did in London till four o'clock in the morning. At Streatham, I managed better; having always some friend who was kind enough to engage him in talk, and favour my retreat."

Boswell departed for Scotland on September 24 ; and Johnson shortly afterwards returned, through Birmingham and Oxford, to London. From thence he went to Brighton, where he remained till about the middle of November. In a letter to Miss Lucy Porter, dated the 20th of that month, he writes :

" Mr. Nollekens, the statuary, has had my direction to send

you a cast of my head. I will pay the carriage when we meet. Let me know how you like it; and what the ladies of your rout say to it. I have heard different opinions. I cannot think where you can put it."

The cast here alluded to was taken from a bust modelled in clay, but never cut in marble. The artist has represented Dr. Johnson without his wig; substituting for it flowing hair which hangs down the neck, copied from a sturdy Irish beggar, originally a pavior, who was called from the street to serve as a model. This man, after he had sat an hour, refused to take a shilling, stating he could have made more by begging. The bust is a fine one, and very like; but certainly the sort of hair is objectionable, and Johnson was very much displeased at the manner in which his head had been loaded with it. The sittings were not very favourable, which rather vexed the sculptor; who once, upon opening the street-door, a vulgarity he was addicted to, peevishly whined, "Now, Doctor, you did say you would give my bust half an hour before dinner, and the dinner has been waiting this long time." To which the Doctor's reply was, "Bow, wow, wow."

In March 1778, Boswell had the felicity of rejoining his friend in the metropolis. He was informed that the room formerly allotted to him in Johnson's residence, Bolt Court, was appropriated to a charitable purpose, Mrs. Desmoulin (the widow of a writing-master of that name), her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael, being all lodged in it. Such was the Doctor's humanity and generosity,¹ that he allowed the first of these females half-a-guinea a week—a twelfth part of his pension.

It appears that the "many odd inhabitants" of his house could not agree, and that their dissensions distressed and mor-

¹ "His liberality, indeed," writes Boswell, "was at all periods of his life very remarkable. Mr. Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received, told me, that when he was a boy at the Charter-house, his father wrote to him to go and pay a visit to Mr. Samuel Johnson; which he accordingly did, and found him in an upper room, of poor appearance. Johnson received him with much courtesy, and talked a great deal to him, as to a schoolboy, of the course of his education, and other particulars. When he afterwards came to know and understand the high character of this great man, he recollects his condescension with wonder. He added, that when he was going away, Mr. Johnson presented him with half a guinea; and this, said Mr. Howard, was at a time when he probably had not another."

tified him exceedingly. He was sometimes afraid of going home, because he was so sure to be met at the door with numberless complaints. "He used," says Mrs. Thrale, "to lament pathetically to me that they made his life miserable, from the impossibility he found of making theirs happy, when every favour he bestowed upon one was wormwood to the rest. If, however, I ventured to blame their ingratitude, and condemn their conduct, he would instantly set about softening the one and justifying the other; and finished commonly by telling me, that I knew not how to make allowances for situations I never experienced."

In one of his letters to the lady above mentioned, Johnson alludes to his unruly household as follows: "Williams hates every body; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll [Miss Carmichael] loves none of them." "Even those intruders," writes Hawkins, "who had taken shelter under his roof, and who, in his absence from home, brought thither their children, found cause to murmur; 'their provision of food was scanty, or their dinners ill dressed':¹ all which he chose to endure, rather than put an end to their clamours by ridding his home of such thankless and troublesome guests. Nay, so insensible was he of the ingratitude of those whom he suffered thus to hang upon him, and among whom he may be said to have divided an income which was little more than sufficient for his own support, that he would submit to reproach and personal affront from some of them: even Levett would sometimes insult him; and Mrs. Williams, in her paroxysms of rage, has been known to drive him from her presence."

It was well for Johnson that he had a refuge at Streatham from the perpetual jarrings of his ill-assorted dependants. Boswell went to him there on the 30th of March. Next morning, at breakfast, the Doctor gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness—a strict attention to truth even in the most minute particulars. "Accustom your children," he said, "constantly to this: if a thing happens at one window, and they,

¹ Yet so particular was Johnson as to this point, that during his residence at Streatham, he returned to his "numerous family" in Fleet-street every Saturday, to give them three good dinners and his company before he came back to the Thrales on Monday night.

when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them: you do not know where deviation from truth will end." *Boswell.* "It may come to the door: and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened." Mrs. Thrale fidgetted at this, and ventured to say, "Nay, this is too much. If Dr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a-day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a-day, if one is not perpetually watching." *Johnson.* "Well, madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth, than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world."

Talking of ghosts, he said, "It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."

On Thursday, April 9, Johnson dined at Sir Joshua Reynolds's with Boswell, Dr. Shipley (the Bishop of St. Asaph), Mr. Gibbon, and some other gentlemen. Goldsmith having been mentioned, the Doctor observed that it was long before his merit came to be acknowledged; that he once complained to him in ludicrous terms of distress, "Whenever I write any thing, the public *make a point* to know nothing about it." "Goldsmith," continued Johnson, "had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry, too, when caught in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. . . . Goldsmith, however, was a man, who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived would have deserved it better. He had, indeed, been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another, and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books."

They talked of old age. Johnson (now in his seventieth year) said, "It is a man's own fault, it is from want of use, if

his mind grows torpid in old age." The bishop asked if an old man does not lose faster than he gets. *J.* "I think not, my lord, if he exerts himself." One of the company observed that he thought it was happy for an old man that insensibility comes upon him. "No, sir," said Johnson, with a noble elevation and disdain; "I should never be happy by being less rational."

The next day, the Doctor and his chronicler were entertained at dinner by Mr. Scott, in his chambers in the Temple. Johnson was not in such spirits as he had been at Sir Joshua's; and for a considerable time little was said. At last he burst forth: "Subordination is sadly broken down in this age. No man, now, has the same authority which his father had,—except a gaoler. No master has it over his servants: it is diminished in our colleges; nay, in our grammar-schools. . . . The chief cause of this is, I think, the great increase of money. No man now depends upon the lord of the manor, when he can send to another country and fetch provisions. The shoe-black¹ at the entry of my court does not depend on me. I

¹ "I recollect," says a contributor to Hone's *Table-Book*, "shoeblacks formerly at the corner of every street, especially in great thoroughfares. There were several every morning on the steps of St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, till late in the afternoon. But the greatest exhibition of these artists was on the site of Finsbury Square, when it was an open field, and a depository for the stones used in paving and street-masonry. There a whole army of shoeblacks intercepted the citizens and clerks on their way from Islington and Hoxton to the counting-houses and shops in the city, with 'Shoeblack, your honour!' 'Black your shoes, sir!' Each of them had a large old tin-kettle containing his apparatus; viz. a capacious pipkin, or other large earthen-pot, containing the blacking, which was made of ivory black, the coarsest moist sugar, and pure water with a little vinegar; a knife, two or three brushes, and an old wig. The old wig was an indispensable requisite to a shoeblack; it whisked away the dust, or thoroughly wiped off the wet dirt which his knife and brushes could not entirely detach; a rag tied to the end of a stick smeared his viscid blacking on the shoe, and if the blacking was 'real japan,' it shone. The old experienced shoe-wearers preferred an oleaginous, lustreless blacking. A more liquid blacking, which took a polish from the brush, was of later use and invention. Nobody, at that time, wore boots except on horseback; and every body wore breeches and stockings; pantaloons or trousers were unheard of. The old shoe-blacks operated on the shoes while they were on the feet; and so dexterously as not to soil the fine white cotton stocking, which was at one time the extreme of fashion, or to smear the buckles, which were universally worn. Latterly, you were accommodated with a pair of old shoes to stand in, and yesterday's paper to read, while your shoes were cleaning and polishing, and your buckles were whitened and brushed. The first incursion on the shoeblacks was by the makers of 'patent cake-blacking,' on sticks formed

can deprive him but of a penny a day, which he hopes somebody else will bring him; and that penny I must carry to another shoeblack; so the trade suffers nothing. . . . But, besides, there is a general relaxation of reverence. No son now depends upon his father, as in former times. Paternity used to be considered as itself a great thing, which had a right to many claims. That is, in general, reduced to very small bounds. My hope is, that as anarchy produces tyranny, this extreme relaxation will produce *freni strictio*."

Johnson, Mrs. Williams, and Boswell dined with Dr. Percy, on Sunday, April 12, when the philosopher had an altercation with his host—a portion of which we shall record, as it gave occasion to display the truly tender and benevolent heart of the former, who, as soon as he found a friend was at all hurt by any thing which he had "said in his wrath," was not only prompt and desirous to be reconciled, but exerted himself to make ample reparation. Books of travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly. "Pennant," said Percy, "does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Lochlomond would describe it better." *Johnson*. "I think he describes very well." *Percy*. "I travelled after him." *J.* "And I travelled after him." *P.* "But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do." Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time; but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant. *Johnson* (pointedly). "This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland." *Percy* (feeling the stroke). "Sir, you may be as rude as you please." *J.* "Hold, sir! Don't talk of rudeness: remember, sir, you told me," puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent, "I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please." *P.* "Upon my honour, sir, I did not mean to be uncivil." *J.* "I cannot say so, sir; for I did mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil." Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been mis-

with a handle like a small battledoors: they suffered a more fearful invasion from the makers of liquid blacking in bottles. Soon afterwards, when 'Day and Martin' manufactured the *ne plus ultra* of blacking, private shoeblacks rapidly disappeared, and now they are extinct."

derstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place. "My dear sir," exclaimed Johnson, "I am willing you shall hang Pennant. . . . He's a *Whig*, sir; a *sad dog*; but he's the best traveller I ever read; he observes more things than any one else does."

On April 15th, the sage and Boswell met at Mr. Dilly's. Mrs. Knowles, a quakeress, and Miss Seward, the "poetess of Lichfield," were present. Before dinner, Johnson seized upon a book, and "seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance," says Boswell, "his method of studying. He kept it wrapped up in the table-cloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness, when he should have finished another; resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else that has been thrown to him."

Respecting man's free-agency, the Doctor observed, "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it." Boswell expressed a horror at the thought of death. "Nay," said Mrs. Knowles, "thou shouldst not have a horror for what is the gate of life." Johnson, standing upon the hearth, rolling about, with a serious, solemn, and somewhat gloomy air, remarked, "No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension." "The Scriptures," said Mrs. Knowles, "tell us, 'The righteous shall have *hope* in his death.'" "Yes, madam," replied Johnson; "that is, he shall not have despair. But consider, the hope^t of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised that the mediation of our SAVIOUR shall be applied to us,—namely, obedience; and where obedience has failed, then as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say that his obedience has been such as he would approve of in another, or even in himself, upon close examination; or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of? No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation."

In allusion to a ghost-story related by John Wesley, the philosopher said, "I am sorry that John did not take more pains to inquire into the evidence of it." "What, sir!" exclaimed Miss Seward, with an incredulous smile, "about a ghost!" "Yes, madam," answered Johnson with solemn vehemence. "This is a question which, after five thousand

years, is yet undecided; a question, whether in theology or philosophy, one of the most important that can come before the human understanding."

Mrs. Knowles mentioned, as a proselyte to quakerism, a young lady well known to Dr. Johnson, for whom he had shewn much affection. The quakeress at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know "that the amiable young creature was sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the Church of England, and embracing a simpler faith." "Madam," said Johnson, frowning very angrily, "she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the church which she left, and that which she embraces, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems." *Mrs. Knowles.* "She had the New Testament before her." *Johnson.* "Madam, she could not understand the New Testament; the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required." *Mrs. K.* "It is clear as to essentials." *J.* "But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself." *Mrs. K.* "Must we, then, go by implicit faith?" *J.* "Why, madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion, have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mahometan, can say for himself?"

April 17th, being Good Friday, Boswell waited on his venerable friend at an early hour. He talked of the strange indecision of mind, and imbecility in the common occurrences of life, which may be observed in some individuals. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "I am in the habit of getting others to do things for me; but I always think afterwards I should have done better for myself." Boswell told him that in a gentleman's house where there was thought to be such extravagance or bad management that he was living much beyond his

income, his lady had objected to the cutting of a pickled mango, of which the price was only two shillings; so here was a very poor saving. "Sir," remarked the Doctor, "that is the blundering economy of a narrow understanding. It is stopping one hole in a sieve."

It was a delightful day: as they walked to St. Clement's Church, Boswell observed that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world. "Fleet Street," said he, "is in my mind more delightful than Tempé." "Ay, sir," replied Johnson; "but let it be compared with Mull!"

On their return from church, Johnson was familiarly accosted in Butcher Row¹ by a decent-looking elderly man, in grey clothes and a wig of many curls. The sage returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. The wearer of the grey apparel introduced himself as Oliver Edwards, an old fellow-collegian of Johnson's. They had not seen one another since 1729; and the Doctor did not at first recollect the name, but gradually, as they walked along, recovered it, and was much pleased at meeting his ancient chum. "When we got," relates Boswell, "to Johnson's house, and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. *Edwards*. 'Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, sir (turning to me), he was delicate in language, and we all feared him.' *Johnson* (to Edwards). 'From your having practised law² so long, sir, I presume you must be rich.' *E.* 'No, sir, I got a good deal of money; but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great part of it.' *J.* 'Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word.' *E.* 'But I shall not die rich.' *J.* 'Nay, sure, sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich.' *E.* 'I wish I had continued at College.' *J.* 'Why do you wish that, sir?' *E.* 'Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxam and several others, and lived comfortably.' *J.* 'Sir, the life of a parson, of a con-

¹ Butcher Row, until within the last fifty years, occupied most of the open space from Shipyard to the end of Picket Street. The ground-plot was that of a long obtuse-angled triangle, of which the western line was formed by the vestry-room and almshouses of St. Clement's. The sides and west end contained shops of various classes, the most respectable of which were on the Strand side, opposite Thanet Place.

² As a solicitor in Chancery.

scientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life.' Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, 'Oh, Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alehouse near Pembroke gate?' . . . E. 'I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife.' J. 'Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone,) I have known what it was to *lose a wife*. It had almos broke my heart.' E. 'How do you live, sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it.' J. 'I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine; for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal.' E. 'Some hogsheads, I warrant you.' J. 'I then had a severe illness, and left it off; and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here, or observed there.' E. 'Don't you eat supper, sir?' J. 'No, sir.' E. 'For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass in order to get to bed. . . . I am grown old: I am sixty-five.' J. 'I shall be sixty-eight next birthday. Come, sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred.'

"This interview," continues Boswell, "confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behaviour to an old fellow-collegian shewed a kindness of disposition very rare at an advanced age. . . . Mr. Edwards had said to me aside, that Dr. Johnson should have been of a profession. I repeated this remark to Johnson, that I might have his own thoughts on the subject. *Johnson.*

‘Sir, it *would* have been better that I had been of a profession. I ought to have been a lawyer.’”¹

In the afternoon, the Doctor and his companion went again to St. Clement’s, and then returned and passed the evening in Mrs. Williams’s room. “I observed,” says Boswell, “that he would not even look at a proof-sheet of his ‘Life of Waller’ on Good Friday.”

The next day, Johnson and his friend had tea together. The Doctor vehemently attacked the Americans. Boswell defended them; and added, that he was always sorry when Johnson talked on that subject. At this the sage was exasperated; but said nothing at the time. They spoke of a gentleman who was running out his fortune in London; and Boswell said, “We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away.” “Nay, sir,” thundered Johnson; “we’ll send you to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will.” This, as may be supposed, was a “horrible shock” to poor Bozzy, who afterwards asked the Doctor why he had said so harsh a thing. “Because, sir,” was the answer, “because you made me angry about the Americans.” “But, why,” inquired Bozzy, “did not you take your revenge directly?” “Because, sir,” replied Johnson, with a smile, “I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons.”

“He shewed me to-night,” relates Boswell, “his drawing-room, very genteelly fitted up.” Miss Hawkins says that this apartment was “not inferior to others in the same local situation, and with a stout old-fashioned mahogany table and chairs.”

On Monday, April 20th, the Doctor remarks, in his Meditations: “In reviewing my time from Easter 1777, I found a very melancholy and shameful blank. So little has been done, that days and months are without any trace. My

¹ Boswell subsequently remarks: “Sir William Scott informs me, that upon the death of the late Lord Lichfield, who was chancellor of the University of Oxford, he said to Johnson, ‘What a pity it is, sir, that you did not follow the profession of the law! You might have been Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, and attained to the dignity of the peerage; and now that the title of Lichfield, your native city, is extinct, you might have had it.’ Johnson, upon this, seemed much agitated; and, in an angry tone, exclaimed, ‘Why will you vex me by suggesting this, when it is too late?’”²

health has, indeed, been very much interrupted. My nights have been, commonly, not only restless, but painful and fatiguing. My respiration was once so difficult, an asthma was suspected. . . . Some relaxation of my breast has been procured, I think, by opium, which, though it never gives me sleep, frees my breast from spasms. I have written a little of the ‘Lives of the Poets,’ I think, with all my usual vigour. I have made sermons, perhaps as readily as formerly. My memory is less faithful in retaining names, &c.; I am afraid, in retaining occurrences. Of this vacillation and vagrancy of mind, I impute a great part to a fortuitous and unsettled life; and therefore purpose to spend my time with more method. This year, the 28th of March passed away without memorial. Poor Tetty, whatever were our faults and failings, we loved each other. I did not forget thee yesterday. Couldst thou have lived! I am now, with the help of God, to begin a new life.”

On the same day Johnson again referred to the extravagant person above alluded to. “Wasting a fortune,” he said to Boswell, “is evaporation by a thousand imperceptible means. If it were a stream, they’d stop it. You must speak to him. It is really miserable. Were he a gamester, it could be said he had hopes of winning. Were he bankrupt in trade, he might have grown rich; but he has neither spirit to spend, nor resolution to spare. He does not spend fast enough to have pleasure from it. He has the crime of prodigality, and the wretchedness of parsimony. If a man is killed in a duel, he is killed as many a one has been killed; but it is a sad thing for a man to lie down and die; to bleed to death, because he has not fortitude enough to sear the wound, or even to stitch it up.”

The choice of language and fecundity of fancy displayed in this instance are remarkable. Such, however, were the characteristics of Johnson’s “table-talk.” He spoke as he wrote. He could take up a topic, and utter upon it a number of the ‘Rambler.’ Once, at Dr. Taylor’s, a few days after the decease of the wife of the Rev. Mr. Kennedy, of Bradley, a woman of extraordinary ability, he described the eccentricities of the man and the woman, with a nicety of discrimination and a force of language equal to the best of his periodical essays. It was well observed by Bishop Percy:

"The conversation of Johnson is strong and clear, and may be compared to an antique statue, where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold. Ordinary conversation resembles an inferior cast."



CHAPTER XII.

Goldsmith's comedies and *Vicar of Wakefield*. The *Beggars' Opera*. Cave. Avarice. The silver-buckle negotiation. The first Whig. Mutual cowardice. Wine. Hogarth's *Modern Midnight Conversation*. Ford's ghost. Manners of the great. Wealthy shopkeepers and their wives. Johnson visits Mr. Langton at Warley-camp. Macbean. Adventures and absurdities of Johnson's pensioners in Bolt Court. Death of Garrick. Fine passages expunged by Goldsmith from his *Vicar of Wakefield*. Extracts from Johnson's *Meditations*. Liberty. Garrick. Johnson goes to Lichfield. Mr. Thrale has an apoplectic fit. Appointment of guardians. Johnson has the gout. Miss Graham. Death of Beauclerk. Protestant riots. Extracts from Johnson's letters to Boswell and Strahan. Johnson takes a part in Mr. Thrale's election contest. Extract from Johnson's *Meditations*.

AT Sir Joshua Reynolds's, on the following Saturday, the Doctor remarked: "Both Goldsmith's comedies were once refused; his first by Garrick, his second by Coleman, who was prevailed on at last by much solicitation, nay, a kind of force, to bring it on. His *Vicar of Wakefield* I myself did not think would have much success. It was written and sold to a bookseller before his *Traveller*, but published after; so little expectation had the bookseller from it. Had it been sold after the *Traveller*, he might have had twice as much money for it, though sixty guineas was no mean price. The bookseller had the advantage of Goldsmith's reputation from the *Traveller* in the sale, though Goldsmith had it not in selling the copy. "The *Beggars' Opera*," observed Sir Joshua, "affords a proof how strangely people will differ in opinion about a literary performance. Burke thinks it has no merit." "It was refused," said Johnson, "by one of the houses; but I should have thought it would succeed, not from any great excellence in the writing, but from the novelty, and the general spirit and gaiety of the piece, which keeps

the audience always attentive, and dismisses them in good humour."

Cave being mentioned, the Doctor related, "Cave used to sell two thousand of the Gentleman's Magazine: yet such was then his minute attention and anxiety that the sale should not suffer the smallest decrease, that he would name a particular person who he heard had talked of leaving off the magazine; and would say, 'Let us have something good next month.'"

Upon the observation that "avarice was inherent in some dispositions," Johnson said, "No man was born a miser, because no man was born to possession. Every man is born *cupidus*—desirous of getting; but not *avarus*—desirous of keeping."

He remarked: "A man cannot with propriety speak of himself, except he relates simple facts; as, 'I was at Richmond; or what depends on mensuration, as, 'I am six feet high.' He is sure he has been at Richmond; he is sure he is six feet high; but he cannot be sure he is wise, or that he has any other excellence. Then, all censure of a man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to shew how much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self-praise, and all the reproach of falsehood."

The philosopher and his pupil were engaged to dine at General Paoli's on April 28th. They went thither in a hackney-coach, and stopped by the way at a toy-shop in St. James's Street, at the corner of St. James's Place, to which Johnson had been directed, but not clearly, for he could not find it at first, and said, "To direct one only to a corner shop is *toying* with one." "I supposed," relates Boswell, "he meant this as a play upon the word *toy*: it was the first time I knew him stoop to such sport. After he had been some time in the shop, he sent for me to come out of the coach, and help him to choose a pair of silver buckles, as those he had were too small. Probably this alteration in dress had been suggested by Mrs. Thrale, by associating with whom his external appearance was much improved. He got better clothes; and the dark colour, from which he never deviated, was enlivened by metal buttons."

When the buckle-negotiation had been satisfactorily completed, and Boswell was again driving along with his Mentor,

he said, "I drank chocolate, sir, this morning with Mr. Eld; and, to my no small surprise, found him to be a *Staffordshire Whig*—a being which I did not believe had existed." "Sir," replied Johnson, "there are rascals in all countries. . . . I have always said, the first Whig was the Devil." At General Paoli's were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, and Mr. John Spottiswoode, a solicitor. At this time fears of an invasion were circulated; to obviate which, Mr. Spottiswoode observed, that Mr. Fraser, the engineer, who had lately come from Dunkirk, said, that the French had the same fear for us. "It is thus," remarked the Doctor, "that mutual cowardice keeps us in peace. Were one half of mankind brave, and one half cowards, the brave would be always beating the cowards. Were all brave, they would lead a very uneasy life; all would be continually fighting: but being all cowards, we go on very well."

Drinking wine became the topic of conversation. "Wine," said Johnson, "gives pleasure; and every pleasure is of itself a good. It is a good unless counterbalanced by evil. . . . Wine makes a man better pleased with himself. I do not say that it makes him more pleasing to others. Sometimes it does. But the danger is, that while a man grows better pleased with himself, he may be growing less pleasing to others. Wine gives a man nothing. It neither gives him knowledge nor wit; it only animates a man, and enables him to bring out what a dread of the company has repressed. It only puts in motion what has been locked up in frost. But this may be good, or it may be bad." *Spottiswoode*. "So, sir, wine is a key which opens a box; but this box may be either full or empty." *Johnson*. "Nay, sir, conversation is the key: wine is a picklock which forces open the box, and injures it. A man should cultivate his mind so, as to have that confidence and readiness without wine which wine gives."

On Tuesday, May 12, Boswell met Johnson at Streatham. Amongst the numerous prints pasted on the walls of Mr. Thrale's dining-room was Hogarth's "Modern Midnight Conversation." In answer to the inquiry of what he knew of Parson Ford, who makes so conspicuous a figure in the picture, Johnson said, "Sir, he was my acquaintance and relation, my mother's nephew. He had purchased a living in the

country, but not simoniacally. I never saw him but in the country. I have been told he was a man of great parts; very profligate; but I never heard he was impious." *Boswell.* "Was there not a story of his ghost having appeared?" *Johnson.* "Sir, it was believed. A waiter at the Hummums, in which house Ford died, had been absent for some time, and returned, not knowing that Ford was dead. Going down to the cellar, according to the story, he met him; going down again, he met him the second time. When he came up, he asked some of the people of the house what Ford could be doing there. They told him Ford was dead. The waiter took a fever, in which he lay for some time. When he recovered, he said he had a message to deliver to some women from Ford; but he was not to tell what, or to whom. He walked out; he was followed; but somewhere about St. Paul's they lost him. He came back, and said he had delivered the message, and the women exclaimed, 'Then we are all undone!' Dr. Pellet, who was not a credulous man, inquired into the truth of this story, and he said the evidence was irresistible. My wife went to the Hummums (it is a place where people get themselves cupped). I believe she went with intention to hear about this story of Ford. At first they were unwilling to tell her; but, after they had talked to her, she came away satisfied that it was true. To be sure, the man had a fever; and this vision may have been the beginning of it. But if the message to the women, and their behaviour upon it, were true as related, there was something supernatural. That rests upon his word; and there it remains."

Boswell stayed at Streatham the whole of the next day, during which his great friend was in a very pleasant conversable humour. Looking at a splendid edition of Lord Chesterfield's miscellaneous works, Johnson laughed, and said, "Here are now two speeches ascribed to him, both of which were written by me; and the best of it is, they have found out, that one is like Demosthenes, and the other like Cicero."

As he was a zealous friend to subordination, he was at all times watchful to repress the vulgar cant against the manners of the great. "High people, sir," he remarked, "are the best: take a hundred ladies of quality, you'll find them better wives,

better mothers, more willing to sacrifice their own pleasure to their children, than a hundred other women. Tradeswomen (I mean the wives of tradesmen) in the city, who are worth from ten to fifteen thousand pounds, are the worst creatures upon earth, grossly ignorant, and thinking viciousness fashionable. . . . No, sir; so far as I have observed, the higher in rank, the richer ladies are, they are the better instructed and the more virtuous."

Johnson's opinion of wealthy shopkeepers was hardly more favourable than the above dictum concerning their spouses. "Upon a visit to me at a country lodging near Twickenham," relates Dr. Maxwell, "he asked what sort of society I had there. I told him, but indifferent; as they chiefly consisted of opulent traders retired from business. He said he never much liked that class of people: 'For, sir,' said he, 'they have lost the civility of tradesmen, without acquiring the manners of gentlemen.'" The incumbents of suburban parishes are too often painfully made aware of the truth of this assertion.

Boswell parted from his illustrious friend on May 19, with assurances of affectionate regard; and left town for Scotland in the evening. Shortly afterwards, Johnson made an excursion to Mr. Langton, at Warley-camp, where that gentleman was at the time stationed as a captain in the Lincolnshire militia. The following particulars of this visit, related by Langton, may not be uninteresting:—

"It was in the summer of the year 1778 that he complied with my invitation to come down to the camp at Warley; and he stayed with me about a week. The scene appeared, notwithstanding a great degree of ill health that he seemed to labour under, to interest and amuse him, as agreeing with the disposition that he constantly manifested towards inquiring into subjects of the military kind. He sat, with a patient degree of attention, to observe the proceedings of a regimental court-martial, that happened to be called in the time of his stay with us; and one night, as late as eleven o'clock, he accompanied the major of the regiment in going what are styled the *rounds*, where he might observe the forms of visiting the guards, for the seeing that they and their sentries are ready in their duty on their several posts.

"On one occasion, when the regiment were going through their exercise, he went quite close to the men at one of the

extremities of it, and watched all their practices attentively; and, when he came away, his remark was, ‘The men indeed do load their muskets and fire with wonderful celerity.’ He was likewise particular in requiring to know what was the weight of the musket-balls in use, and within what distance they might be expected to take effect when fired off.

“In walking among the tents, and observing the difference between those of the officers and private men, he said, that the superiority of accommodation of the better conditions of life, to that of the inferior ones, was never exhibited to him in so distinct a view. The civilities paid to him in the camp were, from the gentlemen of the Lincolnshire regiment, one of the officers of which accommodated him with a tent, in which he slept; and from General Hall, who very courteously invited him to dine with him, where he appeared to be very well pleased with his entertainment, and the civilities he received on the part of the general: the attention of the general’s aide-de-camp, Captain Smith, seemed to be very welcome to him, as appeared by their engaging in a great deal of discourse together. The gentlemen of the East-York regiment likewise, on being informed of his coming, solicited his company at dinner; but by that time he had fixed his departure, so that he could not comply with the invitation.”

We learn from the amusing Diary of Madame D’Arblay,¹ that Johnson returned from Warley Common to Streatham, and at tea-time gave a diverting account of the adventures and absurdities of the “strange creatures” which overran his house in Bolt Court. “Pray, sir,” inquired Mrs. Thrale, “how does Mrs. Williams like all this tribe?” *Johnson.* “Madam, she does not like them at all; but their fondness for her is not greater. She and Desmoulins quarrel incessantly; but, as they can both be occasionally of service to each other, and as neither of them have any other place to go to, their animosity does not force them to separate.” *Mrs. Thrale.* “And pray, sir, what is Mr. Macbean?”² *J.* “Madam, he is a Scotchman: he is a man of great learning, and for his learning I

¹ Better known as the celebrated Miss Fanny Burney, author of *Evelina*, &c.

² Alexander Macbean published, in 1773, a *Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, to which Johnson furnished the preface. He was one of the amanuenses employed by Johnson for the mechanical part of his Dictionary. He died in June 1784.

respect him, and I wish to serve him. He knows many languages, and knows them well; but he knows nothing of life. I advised him to write a geographical dictionary; but I have lost all hopes of his ever doing any thing properly, since I found he gave as much labour to Capua as to Rome." *Mr. Thrale.* "And pray, who is clerk of your kitchen, sir?" *J.* "Why, sir, I am afraid there is none; a general anarchy prevails in my kitchen, as I am told by Mr. Levett, who says it is not now what it used to be." *Mrs. T.* "Mr. Levett, I suppose, sir, has the office of keeping the hospital in health? for he is an apothecary." *J.* "Levett, madam, is a brutal fellow; but I have a good regard for him; for his brutality is in his manners, not in his mind." *Mr. T.* "But how do you get your dinners drest?" *J.* "Why Desmoulins has the chief management of the kitchen; but our roasting is not magnificent, for we have no jack." *Mr. T.* "No jack? why, how do they manage without?" *J.* "Small joints, I believe, they manage with a string, and larger are done at the tavern. I have some thoughts" (with profound gravity) "of buying a jack, because I think a jack is some credit to a house." *Mr. T.* "Well, but you'll have a spit too?" *J.* "No, sir, no; that would be superfluous; for we shall never use it; and if a jack is seen, a spit will be presumed!" *Mrs. T.* "But pray, sir, who is the Poll you talk of? She that you used to abet in her quarrels with Mrs. Williams, and call out, 'At her again, Poll! never flinch, Poll?'" *J.* "Why, I took to Poll very well at first; but she won't do upon a nearer examination." *Mrs. T.* "How came she among you, sir?" *J.* "Why, I don't rightly remember; but we could spare her very well from us. Poll is a stupid slut; I had some hopes of her at first; but when I talked to her tightly and closely, I could make nothing of her; she was wiggle-waggle, and I could never persuade her to be categorical. I wish Miss Burney would come among us: if she would only give us a week, we should furnish her with ample materials for a new scene in her next work."

In a letter, dated "Oct. 31," Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale: "Sir Joshua has finished my picture, and it seems to please every body; but I shall wait to see how it pleases you. To-day Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins had a scold, and Williams was going away; but I bid her not *turn tail*; and she came back, and rather got the upper hand."

Before the close of 1778 appeared the first four volumes of his *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the most eminent of the English Poets*. A work of which we shall speak more particularly under 1780, in which year the remaining volumes of it were published.

In January 1779, the Doctor had to lament the decease of his early friend and pupil, David Garrick ; one whom, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds, he considered as his property, and would never suffer any one to praise or abuse but himself. When Garrick was on his last sick-bed, no arguments would persuade Johnson of his danger : he had prepossessed himself with a notion, that to say a man was sick, was very near wishing him so ; and few things offended him more than prognosticating even the death of an ordinary acquaintance. Garrick's peril was an image which no one durst present before his view : he persisted in the possibility and hope of his recovery ; and his distress for his loss was, for that very reason, poignant to excess. Garrick was followed to Westminster Abbey by a long-extended train of friends, illustrious for their rank and genius. "I saw old Samuel Johnson," says Mr. Cumberland, "standing beside his grave, at the foot of Shakespeare's monument, and bathed in tears."

Shortly after Garrick's death, the Doctor was told in a large company, " You are recent from your Lives of the Poets; why not add your friend Garrick to the number?" Johnson's answer was: " I do not like to be officious; but if Mrs. Garrick will desire me to do it, I shall be very willing to pay that last tribute to the memory of the man I loved." This sentiment was conveyed to Mrs. Garrick ; but no answer was ever returned.

On Monday, March 15th, Boswell arrived in London ; and next morning, at a late hour, found Dr. Johnson sitting over his tea, attended by Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, and a clergyman who had come to submit some poetical pieces to his revision.¹ The bard was a " lank, bony figure, with short black hair : he was writhing himself in agitation, while Johnson read ; and shewing his teeth in a grin of earnestness," exclaimed in broken sentences, and in a keen sharp tone, " Is

¹ " It is wonderful," remarks Boswell, " what a number and variety of writers, some of them even unknown to him, prevailed on his good nature to look over their works, and suggest corrections and improvements."

that poetry, sir?—Is it Pindar?” “Why, sir,” replied the Doctor, “there is a great deal of what is called poetry.” The subject under immediate consideration, when Boswell joined the party, was a ms. translation of the *Carmen Seculare* of Horace. When Johnson had finished its perusal, the author asked him bluntly, “If, upon the whole, it was a good translation?” Johnson, whose regard for truth was uncommonly strict, seemed to be puzzled for a moment what answer to make, as he certainly could not commend the performance; with exquisite address he evaded the question thus: “Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation.”

Boswell was several times with the lexicographer in the course of the following days; but unfortunately preserved no memorial of his conversation till March 26th. On that day he remarked to his Scotch visitor, that he expected to be attacked on account of his Lives of the Poets. “However,” he added, “I would rather be attacked than unnoticed!¹ For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An assault upon a town is a bad thing; but starving is still worse: an assault may be unsuccessful, you may have more men killed than you kill; but if you starve the town, you are sure of victory.”

Respecting a friend of theirs, Boswell observed that he was a very universal man,—quite a man of the world. “Yes, sir,” said Johnson; “but one may be so much a man of the world as to be nothing in the world. I remember a passage in Goldsmith’s Vicar of Wakefield, which he was afterwards fool enough to expunge: ‘I do not love a man who is zealous for nothing.’” *Boswell.* “That was a fine passage.” *Johnson.* “Yes, sir; there was another fine passage, too, which he struck out: ‘When I was a young man, being anxious to dis-

¹ It was after the publication of the Lives of the Poets, that Dr. Farr, being engaged to dine with Sir Joshua Reynolds, mentioned, on coming in, that on his way he had seen a caricature, which he thought clever, of the nine Muses flogging Dr. Johnson round Parnassus. The admirers of Gray and others, who thought their favourites hardly treated in the Lives, were laughing at Dr. Farr’s account of the print, when Dr. Johnson was himself announced. Dr. Farr being the only stranger, Sir Joshua introduced him; and, to Dr. Farr’s infinite embarrassment, repeated what he had just been telling them. Johnson was not at all surly on the occasion, but said, turning to Dr. Farr, “Sir, I am very glad to hear this. I hope the day will never arrive when I shall neither be the object of calumny or ridicule, for then I shall be neglected and forgotten.”

tinguish myself, I was perpetually starting new propositions. But I soon gave this over; for I found that generally what was new was false.' " Boswell said he did not like to sit with people of whom he had not a good opinion. "But," answered Johnson, "you must not indulge your delicacy too much, or you will be a *tête-à-tête* man all your life."

Johnson's Meditations, indited on Good Friday, and the accompanying Saturday and Sunday, this year, are sombre and self-accusing, and the annual review of his conduct more severe and detailed than usual. He writes:

"April 2, Good Friday.—I am now to review the last year, and find little but dismal vacuity, neither business nor pleasure; much intended and little done. My health is much broken; my nights afford me little rest. I have tried opium, but its help is counterbalanced with great disturbance; it prevents the spasms, but it hinders sleep. O God, have mercy on me!

"Last week I published (the first part of) the Lives of the Poets, written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.

"In this last year I have made little acquisition; I have scarcely read any thing. I maintain Mrs. [Desmoulins] and her daughter. Other good of myself I know not where to find, except a little charity. But I am now in my seventieth year; what can be done ought not to be delayed.

"April 3, 1779, 11 P.M., Easter-eve.—This is the time of my annual review, and annual resolution. The review is comfortless; little done. Part of the Life of Dryden and the Life of Milton have been written; but my mind has neither been improved nor enlarged. I have read little, almost nothing; and I am not conscious that I have gained any good, or quitted any evil habits.

"April 4, 1779, Easter-day.—I rose about half an hour after nine, transcribed the prayer written last night; and by neglecting to count time, sat too long at breakfast, so that I came to church at the first lesson. I attended the Litany pretty well; but in the pue could not hear the Communion-service, and missed the prayer for the Church militant. Before I went to the altar, I prayed the occasional prayer. At the altar I commended my departed friends, and again prayed the prayer; I then prayed the Collects, and again my own

prayer by memory. I left out a clause. I then received, I hope with earnestness; and while others received, sat down; but thinking that posture, though usual, improper, I rose and stood. I prayed again in the pue, but with what prayer I have forgotten. When I used the occasional prayer at the altar, I added a general purpose,—to avoid idleness. I gave two shillings to the plate.

“Before I went, I used, I think, my prayer, and endeavoured to calm my mind. After my return I used it again, and the Collect for the day. LORD, have mercy upon me! I have for some nights called Francis to prayers, and last night discoursed with him on the sacrament.”

On Wednesday, April 7th, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, Boswell reminded the Doctor how heartily they used to drink wine together when they were first acquainted, and how he (Boswell) frequently had a headache in consequence. “Nay, sir,” said Johnson, “it was not the *wine* that made your head ache, but the *sense* that I put into it.” “What, sir!” exclaimed Boswell, “will sense make the head ache?” “Yes, sir,” replied the Doctor, with a smile, “when it is not used to it.”

At Allan Ramsay's, on the following day, Johnson observed: “We are all agreed as to our own liberty; we would have as much of it as we can get: but we are not agreed as to the liberty of others; for, in proportion as we take, others must lose. I believe we hardly wish that the mob should have liberty to govern us. When that was the case some time ago, no man was at liberty not to have candles in his windows.” “The result is,” said Ramsay, “that order is better than confusion.” “The result is,” rejoined Johnson, “that order cannot be had but by subordination.” A short time afterwards, Boswell met the Doctor and some other friends at dinner, when the philosopher remarked: “I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning; for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal when you have brought him to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards.”—“To be contradicted, in order to force you to talk, is mighty unpleasing. You *shine*, indeed; but it is by being *ground*.”

Johnson and Boswell dined at Mr. Beauclerk's on April

24th ; on which occasion the Doctor said : " Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfulness man of his age ; a decent liver, in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness ; and a man who gave away freely money acquired by himself. He began the world with a great hunger for money ; the son of a half-pay officer, bred in a family whose study was to make fourpence do as much as others made fourpence halfpenny do. But when he had got money, he was very liberal."¹

On the 3d of May, Boswell set out for Scotland ; and, about the 20th, his venerable friend left town on a visit to Lichfield and Ashbourne ; from whence, in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, he alludes to the serious apoplectic fit by which the portly brewer, her husband, had just been assailed. In a communication, dated "Lichfield, June 23d," he addresses the sufferer as follows :

" My wicked mistress talks as if she thought it possible for me to be indifferent about your health or hers. If I could have done any good, I had not delayed an hour to come to you ; and I will come very soon, to try if my advice can be of any use, or my company of any entertainment.

" What can be done, you must do for yourself. Do not let any uneasy thought settle in your mind. Cheerfulness and exercise are your great remedies. Nothing is for the present worth your anxiety. *Vivere laeti* is one of the great

¹ Of Garrick, some time before the decease of that eminent performer, Johnson remarked : " Garrick is accused of vanity ; but few men would have borne such unremitting prosperity with greater, if with equal, moderation. He is accused too of avarice, though he lives rather like a prince than an actor. But the frugality he practised when he first appeared in the world, has put a stamp upon his character ever since. And now, though his table, his equipage, and his establishment are equal to those of persons of the most splendid rank, the original stain of avarice still blots his name. And yet, had not his early, and perhaps necessary, economy fixed upon him the charge of thrift, he would long since have been reproached with that of luxury. Garrick never enters a room but he regards himself as the object of general attention, from whom the entertainment of the company is expected. And true it is, that he seldom disappoints that expectation ; for he has infinite humour, a very just proportion of wit, and more convivial pleasantry than almost any man living. But then, off as well as on the stage, he is always an actor ; for he holds it so incumbent upon him to be sportive, that his gaiety, from being habitual, is become mechanical : and he can exert his spirits at all times alike, without any consultation of his disposition to hilarity."

rules of health. I believe it will be good to ride often, but never to weariness ; for weariness is itself a temporary resolution of the nerves, and is therefore to be avoided. Labour is exercise continued to fatigue ; exercise is labour used only while it produces pleasure.

" Above all, keep your mind quiet. Do not think with earnestness even of your health ; but think on such things as may please without too much agitation ; among which I hope is, dear sir, your, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

In the autumn of 1779, Boswell accompanied a military friend to Leeds and the metropolis ; and so, as he quaintly remarks, had "a second crop in one year of London and Johnson." On the 4th of October he called at the house of the lexicographer before he was up. Johnson sent for him to his bed-side, and expressed his satisfaction at this incidental meeting, with as much vivacity as if he had been in the gaiety of youth. He called briskly, "Frank, go and get coffee, and let us breakfast in splendour."

During this visit to town, Boswell consulted the Doctor as to the appointment of guardians to his children in case of his decease. "Sir," said the sage, "do not appoint a number of guardians. When there are many, they trust one to another, and the business is neglected. I would advise you to choose only one : let him be a man of respectable character, who, for his own credit, will do what is right; let him be a rich man, so that he be under no temptation to take advantage; and let him be a man of business, who is used to conduct affairs with ability and expertness ; to whom, therefore, the execution of the trust will not be burthensome."

Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale, in a latter dated "Oct. 8:"

"On Sunday the gout left my ankles, and I went very commodiously to church. On Monday night I felt my feet uneasy. On Tuesday I was quite lame. That night I took an opiate, having first taken physic and fasted. Towards morning on Wednesday the pain remitted. Bozzy came to me, and much talk we had. I fasted another day ; and on Wednesday night could walk tolerably. On Thursday, finding myself mending, I ventured on my dinner, which I think has a little interrupted my convalescence. To-day I have

again taken physic, and eaten only some stewed apples. I hope to starve it away. It is no worse than it was at Bright-helmstone."

On Tuesday, October 12th, the Doctor and Boswell dined at Mr. Ramsay's. One of the guests, a beautiful girl of the name of Graham, asked Johnson to "hob or nob" with her. He was flattered by such pleasing attention, and politely told her he never drank wine; but if she would drink a glass of water, he was much at her service. She accepted. "Oho, sir!" said one of the company, "you are caught." "Nay," said Johnson with gallantry, "I do not see *how I am caught*; but if I am caught, I don't want to get free again. If I am caught, I hope to be kept." Then when the two glasses of water were brought, smiling placidly to the young lady, he said, "Madam, let us *reciprocate*."

Boswell quitted London on Monday, October 18, 1799.

The spring of 1780 was rendered mournful to Johnson by the decease of Topham Beauclerk, for whom his affection was so great, that when that gentleman was labouring under that severe illness which at last occasioned his death, the Doctor said, with a voice faltering with emotion, "I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk." At this period, Johnson was engaged upon the completion of his Lives of the Poets, so far as his indolence allowed him to labour. While he was thus occupied, the most alarming and brutal riots that, perhaps, ever disgraced a civilised country, disturbed the peace of the metropolis. "To persons of the present day," says a modern writer, "who have always been used to hear of 'liberality,' or 'civil and religious liberty,' or some similar pretence, in connexion with the cruelties and excesses of a lawless multitude, it sounds strange to be told of the 'Church and King' mobs, the zealous 'Protestants' of Dr. Johnson's day. Yet such was the sheep's clothing in which the wolfish spirit of the rabble then sought to disguise itself." Some of the extremely severe penalties upon Roman Catholics, imposed in a persecuting age, were removed in 1780, and this served as an excuse for the above-mentioned commotions; of which Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale contain the following lively description:

" June 9th.—On Friday, the Protestants met in Saint

George's Fields, at the summons of Lord George Gordon ; and marching to Westminster, insulted the Lords and Commons, who bore it with great tameness. At night, the outrages began by the demolition of the mass-house by Lincoln's Inn. An exact journal of a week's defiance of government, I cannot give you. On Monday, Mr. Strahan, who had been insulted, spoke to Lord Mansfield, who had, I think, been insulted too, of the licentiousness of the populace ; and his lordship treated it as a very slight irregularity. On Tuesday night, they pulled down Fielding's house, and burnt his goods in the street. They had gutted, on Monday, Sir G. Saville's house ; but the building was saved. On Tuesday evening, leaving Fielding's ruins, they went to Newgate to demand their companions, who had been seized demolishing the chapel. The keeper could not release them but by the mayor's permission, which he went to ask ; at his return he found all the prisoners released, and Newgate in a blaze. They then went to Bloomsbury, and fastened upon Lord Mansfield's house, which they pulled down ; and as for his goods, they totally burnt them. They have since gone to Caen Wood ; but a guard was there before them. They plundered some papists, I think, and burnt a mass-house in Moorfields the same night.

"On Wednesday, I walked with Dr. Scot to look at Newgate, and found it in ruins, with the fire yet glowing. As I went by, the Protestants were plundering the sessions-house at the Old Bailey. There were not, I believe, a hundred ; but they did their work at leisure, in full security, without sentinels, without trepidation, as men lawfully employed in full day. Such is the cowardice of a commercial place. On Wednesday, they broke open the Fleet, and the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, and Wood Street compter, and Clerkenwell bridewell, and released all the prisoners. At night, they set fire to the Fleet, and to the King's Bench, and I know not how many other places ; and one might see the glare of conflagration fill the sky from many parts. The sight was dreadful. Some people were threatened : Mrs. Strahan advised me to take care of myself. Such a time of terror you have been happy in not seeing. The king said in council, ' That the magistrates had not done their duty, but that he would do his own ; ' and a proclamation was published, directing us to keep

our servants within doors, as the peace was now to be preserved by force. The soldiers were sent out to different parts, and the town is now at quiet.

“ June 10th.—The soldiers are stationed so as to be every where within call: there is no longer any body of rioters, and the individuals are hunted to their holes, and led to prison. Lord George was last night sent to the Tower. Mr. John Wilkes was this day in my neighbourhood, to seize the publisher of a seditious paper.

“ Several chapels have been destroyed, and several inoffensive papists have been plundered; but the high sport was to burn the gaols. This was a good rabble-trick. The debtors and criminals were all set at liberty; but of the criminals, as has always happened, many are already retaken; and two pirates have surrendered themselves, and it is expected that they will be pardoned. Government now acts again with its proper force: and we are all under the protection of the king and the law.

“ June 12th.—The public has escaped a very heavy calamity. The rioters attempted the bank on Wednesday night, but in no great number; and like other thieves, with no great resolution. Jack Wilkes headed the party that drove them away. It is agreed, that if they had seized the bank on Tuesday, at the height of the panic, when no resistance had been prepared, they might have carried irrecoverably away whatever they had found. Jack, who was always zealous for order and decency, declares, that if he be trusted with power, he will not leave a rioter alive. There is, however, now no longer any need of heroism or bloodshed. . . .

“ June 14th.—There has indeed been an universal panic, from which the king was the first that recovered. Without the concurrence of his ministers, or the assistance of the civil magistrates, he put the soldiers in motion, and saved the town from calamities, such as a rabble’s government must naturally produce.”¹

¹ The number of persons who perished in these riots could not be accurately ascertained. According to the military returns, 210 persons died by shot or sword in the streets, and 75 in hospitals; 173 were wounded and captured. How many died of injuries unseen, cannot be computed. Many more perished in the flames, or died from excesses of one kind or other. Justice came in at the close to demand her due. At the Old Bailey, 85 persons were tried for the riots, and of these 18 were executed, one woman, a

In a letter to Boswell, bearing date "August 21," Johnson writes :

"I have sat at home in Bolt Court all the summer, thinking to write the Lives, and a great part of the time only thinking. Several of them, however, are done, and I still think to do the rest.

"Mr. Thrale and his family have, since his illness, passed their time first at Bath, and then at Brighthelmstone; but I have been at neither place. I would have gone to Lichfield, if I could have had time; and I might have had time, if I had been active; but I have missed much, and done little.

"In the late disturbances, Mr. Thrale's house and stock were in great danger. The mob was pacified at their first invasion with about fifty pounds in drink and meat; and at their second, were driven away by the soldiers. Mr. Strahan got a garrison into his house, and maintained them a fortnight: he was so frightened, that he removed part of his goods. Mrs. Williams took shelter in the country.

"I know not whether I shall get a ramble this autumn. It is now about the time when we were travelling. I have, however, better health than I had then, and hope you and I may yet shew ourselves on some part of Europe, Asia, or Africa. . . .

"I suppose your little ladies are grown tall; and your son has become a learned young man. I love them all, and I love your naughty lady, whom I never shall persuade to love me. When the Lives are done, I shall send them to complete her collection; but must send them in paper, as, for want of a pattern, I cannot bind them to fit the rest. I am, sir, yours most affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

On the 30th of the same month, Johnson addressed to a young clergyman, probably the Rev. George Strahan, son

negro, being of the number. By a special commission for Surrey, 45 prisoners were tried, and 26 of them capitally convicted, though two or three received respites. Lord George Gordon was arrested on the 9th of June, and conveyed to the Tower under a strong guard. The government thought it prudent to allow eight months to elapse before trying him; and he was then acquitted of any foreknowledge or approval of the rioting. The after-life of this nobleman was marked with vagaries of an insane character. He died in Newgate on the 1st Nov. 1793, at the age of 42.

of Mr. Strahan the printer, who published his Prayers and Meditations, the following excellent counsel :

“ You are afraid of falling into some improprieties in the daily service, by reading to an audience that requires no exactness. Your fear, I hope, secures you from danger. They who contract absurd habits are such as have no fear. It is impossible to do the same thing very often without some peculiarity of manner ; but that manner may be good or bad, and a little care will at least preserve it from being bad : to make it good, there must, I think, be something of natural or casual felicity, which cannot be taught.

“ Your present mode of making your sermons seems very judicious. Few frequent preachers can be supposed to have sermons more their own than yours will be. Take care to register, somewhere or other, the authors from whom your several discourses are borrowed ; and do not imagine that you shall always remember, even what, perhaps, you now think it impossible to forget.

“ My advice, however, is, that you attempt, from time to time, an original sermon ; and, in the labour of composition, do not burden your mind with too much at once ; do not exact from yourself at one effort of excogitation, propriety of thought and elegance of expression. Invent first, and then embellish. The production of something, where nothing was before, is an act of greater energy than the expansion or decoration of the thing produced. Set down diligently your thoughts as they rise in the first words that occur ; and when you have matter, you will easily give it form : nor, perhaps, will this method be always necessary ; for, by habit, your thoughts and diction will flow together.

“ The composition of sermons is not very difficult. The divisions not only help the memory of the hearer, but direct the judgment of the writer. They supply sources of invention, and keep every part in its proper place.

“ What I like least in your letter is your account of the manners of your parish ; from which I gather, that it has been long neglected by the parson. The Dean of Carlisle (Dr. Percy), who was then a little rector in Northamptonshire, told me, that it might be discerned whether or no there was a clergyman resident in a parish, by the civil or savage manner of the people. Such a congregation as yours stands in need of

much reformation : and I would not have you think it impossible to reform them. A very savage parish was civilised by a decayed gentlewoman, who came among them to teach a petty school. My learned friend, Dr. Wheeler of Oxford, when he was a young man, had the care of a neighbouring parish for fifteen pounds a year, which he was never paid ; but he counted it a convenience, that it compelled him to make a sermon weekly. One woman he could not bring to the communion ; and when he reproved or exhorted her, she only answered that she was no scholar. He was advised to set some good woman or man of the parish, a little wiser than herself, to talk to her in a language level to her mind. Such honest, I may call them holy, artifices must be practised by every clergyman ; for all means must be tried by which souls may be saved. Talk to your people, however, as much as you can ; and you will find, that the more frequently you converse with them upon religious subjects, the more willingly they will attend, and the more submissively they will learn. A clergyman's diligence always makes him venerable. I think I have now only to say, that, in the momentous work you have undertaken, I pray God to bless you."

During September, Johnson was busied in writing advertisements and letters for Mr. Thrale, who at this time had another contest for the representation of the borough of Southwark. On this, or a former occasion, the Doctor actually took a personal part in the election. "Dr. Johnson," says one of his biographers, "knew how to be merry with mean people, as well as to be sad with them : he loved the lower ranks of humanity with a real affection ; and though his talents and learning kept him always in the sphere of upper life, yet he never lost sight of the time when he and they shared pain and pleasure in common. A *borough* election once shewed me his toleration of boisterous mirth, and his content in the company of people whom one would have thought at first sight little calculated for his society. A rough fellow one day on such an occasion, a hatter by trade, seeing Dr. Johnson's beaver in a state of decay, seized it suddenly with one hand, and clapping him on the back with the other : 'Ah, Master Johnson,' says he, 'this is no time to be thinking about hats.' 'No, no, sir,' replies our Doctor in a cheerful tone, 'hats are of no use now, except to throw up in the air

and huzza with ;' accompanying his words with the true election halloo."

The following entry occurs in Johnson's Prayers and Meditations, under the date of "September 16, 1780."

"I am now beginning the seventy-second year of my life, with more strength of body and greater vigour of mind than I think is common at that age. But though the convulsions in my breast are relieved, my sleep is seldom long. My nights are wakeful, and therefore I am sometimes sleepy in the day. I have been attentive to my diet, and have diminished the bulk of my body. I have not at all studied nor written diligently. I have Swift and Pope yet to write; Swift is just begun.

"I have forgotten or neglected my resolutions or purposes, which I now humbly and timorously renew. Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation. Perhaps GOD may grant me now to begin a wiser and better life."

Allusion has been made in a preceding page to Mr. Macbean. Johnson, in the October of this year, solicited the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, to procure his admission into the Charter-House, and his application was, in the end, successful.



CHAPTER XIII.

“Liberty and necessity.” *Lives of the Poets*. Mr. Thrale’s library. Johnson’s portrait. His mode of walking. Mr. Thrale’s decease. Johnson’s letter to the widow. Mr. Edwards. Apparitions. Mr. Hollis. A printer’s devil. “A bottom of good sense.” Johnson’s diligent discharge of his duties as Mr. Thrale’s executor. “Squire Dilly.” Mr. Young. Southill. Impressions. Assurance. Luton Hoe. Madame D’Arblay. Extracts from Johnson’s Meditations. His infrequent attendance at the Holy Communion. He visits Oxford, &c. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale.

DURING the last two months of 1780, and the January of the year following, Johnson appears to have been occupied with the concluding Lives to which he alludes in the last-cited extract from his private register. In February 1781, Boswell sent him a letter, in which the writer complained of having been “troubled by a recurrence of the perplexing question of liberty and necessity;” and mentioned that he hoped soon to meet the venerable moralist in London. The Doctor’s reply was short and cheerful: “I hoped,” he wrote, “you had got rid of all this hypocrisy of misery. What have you to do with liberty and necessity? Or what more than to hold your tongue about it? Do not doubt but I shall be most heartily glad to see you here again; for I love every part about you but your affectation of distress. I have at last finished my Lives, and have laid up for you a load of copy, all out of order, so that it will amuse you a long time to set it right. Come to me, my dear Bozzy, and let us be as happy as we can. We will go again to the Mitre, and talk old times over. I am, dear sir, yours affectionately,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

The above epistle is dated “March 14.” In the Doctor’s meditations on Good Friday, the 13th of the next month, he

records that the Lives of the Poets were written in his “usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.” Madame D’Arblay affirms that the composition of these biographies was to Johnson “a work so light and easy, that it never robbed his friends of one moment of the time that he would otherwise have spared to their society. Lives, however, strictly speaking, they are not; he merely employed in them such materials, with respect to biography, as he had already at hand, without giving himself any trouble in researches for what might be new or unknown; though he gladly accepted any that were offered to him, if well authenticated. The critical investigations alone he considered as his business. He himself never named them but as prefaces. No man held in nobler scorn a promise that outwent performance.” We are told by the same amusing author, that, while this publication was in progress, when only the Thrale family and its nearly adopted guests, the two Burneys,¹ were assembled, Dr. Johnson would frequently produce one of its proof sheets at the breakfast-table, which was always in the library.² “These proofs,” she relates, “Mrs. Thrale

¹ Dr. Burney, the eminent musician, and his daughter Fanny, author of *Evelina*, &c.

² “Mr. Thrale had lately fitted up a rational, readable, well-chosen library. It were superfluous to say that he had neither authors for shew, nor bindings for vanity, when it is known, that while it was forming, he placed merely one hundred pounds in Dr. Johnson’s hands for its completion. . . . One hundred pounds, according to the expensive habits of the present day, of decorating books like courtiers and coxcombs rather than like students and philosophers, would scarcely purchase a single row for a bookcase of the length of Mr. Thrale’s at Streatham; though under such guidance as that of Dr. Johnson, to whom all finery seemed foppery, and all foppery futility, that sum, added to the books naturally inherited, or already collected, amply sufficed for the unsophisticated reader, where no peculiar pursuit, or unlimited spirit of research, demanded a collection for reference rather than for instruction or enjoyment. This was no sooner accomplished, than Mr. Thrale resolved to surmount these treasures for the mind by a similar regale for the eyes, in selecting the persons he most loved to contemplate from amongst his friends and favourites, to preside over the literature that stood highest in his estimation. And that his portrait-painter might go hand in hand in judgment with his collector of books, he fixed upon the matchless Sir Joshua Reynolds to add living excellence to dead perfection, by giving him the personal resemblance of the following elected set; every one of which occasionally made a part of the brilliant society of Streatham. Mrs. Thrale and her eldest daughter were in one piece, over the fireplace, at full length. The rest of the pictures were all three-quarters. Mr. Thrale was over the door leading to his study. The general collection then began by Lord Sandys and Lord Westcote, two early noble

was permitted to read aloud; and the discussions to which they led were in the highest degree entertaining. Dr. Burney 'wistfully' desired to possess one of them, but left his daughter to risk the petition. A hint, however, proved sufficient, and was understood not alone with compliance but vivacity. Boswell, Dr. Johnson said, had engaged Frank Barber, his negro servant, to collect and preserve all the proof sheets; but though it had not been without the knowledge, it was without the order or the interference of their author: to the present solicitor, therefore, willingly and without scruple he now offered an entire life; adding, with a benignant smile, 'Choose your poet.' Miss Burney unhesitatingly selected Pope: "and that not merely," she observes, "because, next to Shakespeare himself, Pope draws human characters the most veridically, perhaps, of any poetic delineator, but for yet another reason. Dr. Johnson composed with so ready an accuracy, that he sent his copy to the press unread; reserving all his corrections for the proof sheets: and consequently, as not even Dr. Johnson could read twice without ameliorating some passages, his proof sheets were at times liberally marked with changes; and, as the Museum copy of Pope's Translation of the Iliad, from which Dr. Johnson has given many examples, contains abundant emendations by Pope, the memorialist secured at once, on the same page, the marginal alterations and second thoughts of that great author, and of his great biographer."

When the book was published, Johnson brought to Streatham a complete set, handsomely bound, of the works of the poets, as well as his own prefaces, to present to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. And then, telling Miss Burney that to the king and to the "chiefs of Streatham" alone, he could offer so large a tribute, he placed before her a bound copy of his own part of the work; in the title-page of which he gratified her earnest

friends of Mr. Thrale. Then followed Dr. Johnson, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Burke, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Baretti, Sir Robert Chambers, and Sir Joshua Reynolds himself;—all painted in the highest style of the great master, who much delighted in this his Streatham gallery. There was place left but for one more frame, when the acquaintance with Dr. Burney began at Streatham; and the charm of his conversation and manners, joined to his celebrity in letters, so quickly won upon the master as well as the mistress of the mansion, that he was presently selected for the honour of filling up this last chasm in the chain of Streatham worthies."—Madame D'Arblay's *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, vol. ii. pp. 79-81.

request by writing her name, and “from the author.” “After which,” relates Madame D’Arblay, “at her particular solicitation, he gave her a small engraving of his portrait from the picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds. And while, some time afterwards, she was examining it at a distant table, Dr. Johnson, in passing across the room, stopt to discover by what she was occupied; which he no sooner discerned, than he began seesawing for a moment or two in silence, and then, with a ludicrous half laugh, peeping over her shoulder, he called out, ‘Ah, ha! Sam Johnson!—I see thee!—And an ugly dog thou art!’”

Of all Johnson’s literary productions, none were so immediately popular,—none, perhaps, have been perused more generally and with such pleasure, as the one last mentioned. Philology and biography¹ were his favourite pursuits: and he delighted to expatiate, in conversation, on the merits of the English poets, the peculiarities of their characters, and the events of their lives; and his mind was so well stored with information on all these topics, that he was able to strike off their biographies, as appears from the original MSS., with wonderful correctness and rapidity. When he began to write, “the subject,” says Boswell, “swelled in such a manner, that instead of prefaces to each poet, as he had originally intended, he produced an ample, rich, and most entertaining view of them in every respect.” Johnson, indeed, to cite the words of Byron, “strips many a leaf from every laurel; still his Lives of the Poets is the finest critical work extant, and can never be read without instruction and delight.” On their first appearance their author was assailed, as he anticipated, from various quarters. By some violent Whigs he was arraigned of injustice to Milton; by some Cambridge men, of depreciating Gray; and his expressing with a dignified freedom what he really thought of George Lord Lyttleton gave offence to some of the friends of that nobleman. The “feeble though shrill outcry” of these angry critics gave Johnson no disturbance. To a friend who talked to him respecting it, he nobly observed, “Sir, I considered myself as intrusted with a certain

¹ A gentleman once observed to Johnson, that, in his opinion, the Doctor’s strength lay in writing biography, in which line of composition he infinitely exceeded all his competitors. “Sir,” said Johnson, “I believe that is true. The dogs don’t know how to write trifles with dignity.”

portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely; let them shew where they think me wrong."

We have already stated that the remuneration which the Doctor stipulated to receive for his Prefaces was two hundred guineas. The booksellers spontaneously added a third hundred. The Lives were soon published in a separate edition; when, for a very few corrections, Johnson was presented with another hundred guineas.

Boswell arrived in London on March 19th; and on the 20th met Johnson in Fleet Street, walking, or rather indeed moving along after the fashion so graphically described by one of his biographers: "When he walked the streets," says this writer, "what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion independent of his feet." That he was often much stared at, remarks Boswell, while he advanced in this manner, may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burden again.

Mr. Thrale for many years, in utter ignorance of the mischief he was doing, encouraged, by the indulgence of immoderate sleep after meals, a propensity to paralysis. The prognostics of disease were then little observed but by men of science; and Dr. Johnson was so little aware of the unhealthiness of his friend's practice,¹ that instead of interposing his

¹ "This instance of complete vacuity of practical information upon diseases and remedies in Dr. Johnson," says Madame D'Arblay, "will cease to give surprise, when it is known that, near the middle of his life, and in the fullest force of his noble faculties, upon finding himself assailed by a severe fit of the gout in his ankle, he sent for a pail of cold water, into which he plunged his leg during the worst of the paroxysm—a feat of intrepid ignorance—incongruous as sounds the word ignorance in speaking of Dr. Johnson—that probably he had cause to rue during his whole life; for the gout, of which he chose to get rid in so succinct a manner—a feat in which he often exulted—might have carried off many of the direful obstructions, and asthmatic seizures and sufferings, of which his latter years were wretchedly the martyrs." Johnson, however, had no less an authority for the "feat" above mentioned than Hervey, the famous discoverer of the circulation of the blood; of whom it is recorded that "he was much and

potent exhortation, he laughingly said, "Mr. Thrale will out-sleep the seven sleepers." Thus did the wealthy brewer go on in a self-destroying line of conduct, till he was struck, as we have before mentioned, with a fit of apoplexy. Even after this warning he neglected the advice of his physicians, and the means which, under GOD, might have accomplished his recovery. Such a course could have but one termination. The last and fatal seizure was inflicted at his town house in Grosvenor Square, on the morning of Wednesday the 4th of April, for which day half the fashion of London had been invited to an assembly at his residence. Johnson was in the house at the time,¹ and thus alludes to Mr. Thrale's decease :

"Good Friday, April 13th, 1781. On Wednesday the 11th, was buried my dear friend Thrale, who died on Wednesday, 4th; and with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wednesday morning he expired. I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect or benignity. Farewell. May GOD, that delighteth in mercy, have had mercy on thee! I had constantly prayed for him sometime before his death. The decease of him from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities of amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. But my business is with myself."

Deeply as Johnson lamented his friend's demise, he did not permit his own sorrow to prevent his suggesting to the widow those topics of consolation which religion alone can supply. On the 5th of April he wrote to her as follows :

"DEAREST MADAM,—Of your injunctions to pray for you and write to you, I hope to leave neither unobserved; and I hope to find you willing in a short time to alleviate your

often troubled with the gout; and his way of cure was thus : he would then sit with his legs bare if it were frost, on the leads of Cockayne House, put them into a pail of water till he was about dead with cold, and betake himself to his stove, and so—'twas gone."—*Letters written by eminent Persons in the 17th and 18th Centuries; and Lives of eminent Men, by John Aubrey, Esq.*

¹ "He attended," relates Hawkins, "Mr. Thrale in his last moments, and stayed in the room praying, as is imagined, till he had drawn his last breath. 'His servants,' said he, 'would have waited upon him in this awful period, and why not his friends?'"

trouble by some other exercise of the mind. I am not without my part of the calamity. No death since that of my wife has ever oppressed me like this. But let us remember we are in the hands of Him who knows when to give and when to take away ; who will look upon us with mercy through all our variations of existence, and who invites us to call on Him in the day of trouble. Call upon Him in this great revolution of life, and call with confidence. You will then find comfort for the past, and support for the future. He that has given you happiness in marriage, to a degree of which, without personal knowledge, I should have thought the description fabulous, can give you another mode of happiness as a mother, and at last the happiness of losing all temporal cares in the thoughts of an eternity in heaven.

“I do not exhort you to reason yourself into tranquillity. We must first pray, and then labour; first implore the blessing of GOD, and those means which He puts into our hands. Cultivated ground has few weeds; a mind occupied by lawful business has little room for useless regret.

“We read the will to-day; but I will not fill my first letter with any account, than that with all my zeal for your advantage, I am satisfied; and that the other executors, more used to consider property than I, commended it for wisdom and equity. Yet why should I not tell you that you have five hundred pounds for your immediate expenses, and two thousand pounds a-year, with both the houses, and all the goods?

“Let us pray for one another, that the time, whether long or short, that shall yet be granted us, may be well spent; and that when this life, which at the longest is very short, shall come to an end, a better may begin which shall never end.”

On Good Friday, April 13, Boswell accompanied Johnson, as usual, to St. Clement’s Church in the Strand. They saw the Doctor’s old fellow-collegian, Edwards; and Boswell said to him, “I think, sir, Dr. Johnson and you meet only at church.” “Sir,” was the pious reply, “it is the best placee we can meet in, except heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too.” The Doctor subsequently told his companion that there had been very little communication between Edwards and him after their unexpected renewal of acquaintance. “But,” added he, smiling, “he met me once and said, ‘I am told you have written a very pretty book called the Rambler.’ I was

unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set.”

Boswell, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Desmoulins, Mrs. Hall (sister of John Wesley), Mr. Macbean, Mr. Allen (the printer), and Mr. Levett, assembled round the Doctor’s dinner-table on Easter-day, upon which occasion Johnson observed concerning apparitions: “A total disbelief of them is adverse to the opinion of the existence of the soul between death and the last day. The question simply is, whether departed spirits ever have the power of making themselves perceptible to us. A man who thinks he has seen an apparition can only be convinced himself, his authority will not convince another; and his conviction, if rational, must be founded on being told something which cannot be known but by supernatural means.”¹

He mentioned a thing as not unfrequent—the being *called*, that is, hearing one’s name pronounced by the voice of a known person at a great distance, far beyond the possibility of being reached by any sound uttered by human organs. “One day,” he said, “at Oxford, as he was turning the key of his chamber, he heard his mother distinctly call—*Sam*. She was then at Lichfield; but nothing ensued.”

“Some time after this,” relates Boswell, “upon his making a remark which escaped my attention, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Hall were both together striving to answer him. He grew angry, and called out loudly, ‘Nay, when you both speak at once, it is intolerable.’ But, checking himself, and softening, he said, ‘This one may say, though you *are* ladies.’ Then he

¹ With due deference to so high an authority, we think—not always. For example, might not the party of whom the following story is related, have a “rational” conviction that he had seen an apparition, although he was not told any thing which could not be known but by supernatural means? The tale is told by Mr. Neale, who vouches for its truth. A gentleman was returning to his house at Evesham, in Worcestershire, one summer evening, in the late twilight. When a short distance from the town, he saw, on the opposite side of the road, a friend, whom he well knew to have been for some years dead. Excessively terrified, he quickened his pace, the figure did the same; he walked slowly, the apparition followed his example. So the pair kept on till they were almost in the town, when the gentleman in question saw two ill-looking fellows crouching down at the side of a hedge, and heard one of them say to the other, “It won’t do, Tom; *there are two of them*.” Shortly after passing these men, the apparition vanished. Some time subsequently, it was discovered that the two men had formed a design of robbing the gentleman on that particular evening, and were only restrained from doing so by the belief that he was accompanied by a friend.—*Hieroglogus*, p. 144.

brightened into gay humour, and addressed them in one of the songs of the *Beggars' Opera*:

'But two at a time there's no mortal can bear.'

'What, sir,' said I, 'are you going to turn Captain Macbeth?' There was something as pleasantly ludicrous in this scene as can be imagined. The contrast between Macheath, Polly, and Lucy, and Dr. Samuel Johnson, blind, peevish Mrs. Williams, and lean, lank, preaching Mrs. Hall, was exquisite."

April 20th is characterised by Boswell as one of the happiest days that he remembers to have spent in the whole course of his life. He and his venerable friend dined together at Mrs. Garrick's, with Miss Hannah More, Sir Joshua Reynolds, &c. One of the company having said of a Mr. Hollis, a strenuous whig, "I doubt he was an atheist;" Johnson replied, "I don't know that. He might, perhaps, have become one, if he had had time to ripen (smiling). He might have *exuberated* into an atheist." In the evening the party was increased by the Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Percy, and others. Talking of a very respectable author, the Doctor told them a curious circumstance in his life, which was, that he had married a printer's devil. "A printer's devil, sir!" exclaimed Reynolds; "why, I thought a printer's devil was a creature with a black face, and in rags." "Yes, sir," said Johnson; "but I suppose he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her." Then looking very serious and very earnest, he added, "And she did not disgrace him;—the woman had a bottom of good sense."

The word *bottom* thus introduced was so ludicrous when contrasted with his gravity, that most of the company could not forbear tittering and laughing. Johnson's pride could not bear that any expression of his should excite ridicule when he did not intend it: he therefore resolved to assume and exercise despotic power, glanced sternly around, and called out in a strong tone, "Where's the merriment?" Then collecting himself, and looking awful, to make his hearers feel how he could impose restraint, and, as it were, searching his mind for a still more ludicrous word, he slowly pronounced, "I say, the *woman* was *fundamentally* sensible;" as if he had said, Hear this now, and laugh if you dare! "We all," remarks Boswell, "sat composed as at a funeral."

For some time after the day on which the above amusing incident occurred, the friends did not often meet. Boswell was occupied with legal matters, and Johnson with engagements devolving on him as one of Mr. Thrale's executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual in his estimation, from his circumstances having been always such that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. He bestowed on his remaining hostess every minute that she could desire or require of his time and services; "and nothing," writes Madame D'Arblay, "could be wiser in counsel, more zealous in good offices, or kinder of intention, than the whole of his conduct in performing the duties that he deemed to devolve upon him by the will of his late friend." "I could not," observes Boswell, "but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold." The sale took place in May 1781, and produced 135,000*l.* Lord Lucan relates that when it was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about, with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like an exciseman; and on being asked what he really considered to be the value of the property to be disposed of, answered, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." Messrs. Barclay, Perkins, and Company were the purchasers of the brewery, which has since become the largest establishment of the kind in the world.

Much to his regret, Boswell set out for Scotland on Saturday, June 2d. He had promised to visit, on his way, "Squire Dilly," the elder brother of the booksellers of that name, at his seat at Southill, Bedfordshire. Johnson consented to accompany him and Mr. Charles Dilly thither. During the journey he was chiefly engaged in reading Bishop Watson's second volume of *Chemical Essays*, and his own *Prince of Abyssinia*; "on which," says Boswell, "he seemed to be intensely fixed, having told us that he had not looked at it since it was first finished. I happened to take it out of my pocket this day, and he seized upon it with avidity." At Welvin, the Doctor and his companions called upon Mr. Young, son of the author of the *Night Thoughts*. When they entered that gentleman's parlour, Johnson made him a very polite bow, and said, "Sir, I had a curiosity to come and see this place. I

had the honour to know that great man your father." They went into the garden, where they found a gravel-walk, on each side of which was a row of trees, planted by Dr. Young, which formed a handsome pointed arch. They sat some time in the summer-house, and Boswell remarked to Mr. Young, that he had been told his father was cheerful. "Sir," he replied, "he was too well-bred a man not to be cheerful in company; but he was gloomy when alone. He never was cheerful after my mother's death, and he had met with many disappointments." Johnson afterwards observed to his disciple, "That this was no favourable account of Dr. Young; for it is not becoming in a man to have so little acquiescence in the ways of Providence, as to be gloomy because he has not obtained as much preferment as he expected; nor to continue gloomy for the loss of his wife. Grief has its time."

The Doctor was very happy at Southill. On Sunday, June 3d, the party went to church. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated, and Boswell stayed to communicate. When he went afterwards into Johnson's room, the philosopher said, "You did right to receive the Holy Communion: I had not thought of it;" implying that he did not choose to approach the altar without a previous preparation. Consoled and elevated by his "pious exercises," Boswell proceeded to express himself with an "unrestrained fervour" to his illustrious friend, saying, "My dear sir, I would fain be a good man; and I am very good now—I fear God, and honour the king; I wish to do no ill, and to be benevolent to all mankind."

Johnson looked at him with a "benignant indulgence;" but took occasion to give him wise and salutary caution. "Do not, sir," he remarked, "accustom yourself to trust to *impressions*. There is a middle state of mind between conviction and hypocrisy, of which many are unconscious. By trusting to impressions, a man may gradually come to yield to them, and at length be subject to them, so as not to be a free agent, or, what is the same thing in effect, to *suppose* that he is not a free agent. A man who is in that state should not be suffered to live; if he declares he cannot help acting in a particular way, and is irresistibly impelled, there can be no confidence in him, no more than in a tiger. But, sir, no man believes himself to be impelled irresistibly; we know that he who says he believes it, lies. Favourable impressions at particular mo-

ments, as to the state of our souls, may be deceitful and dangerous. In general, no man can be sure of his acceptance with God ; some, indeed, may have had it revealed to them. St. Paul, who wrought miracles, may have had a miracle wrought on himself, and may have obtained supernatural assurance of pardon, and mercy, and beatitude ; yet St. Paul, though he expresses strong hope, also expresses fear, lest having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway."

These observations on assurance accord with the teaching of the Church of England. So fully does she recognise the possibility of a good man's final apostacy, that she directs her children to pray, "O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our *last hour*, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee."

The next day was partly devoted by Johnson to an excursion to Luton Hoe, the place of Lord Bute. Here the sage made one or two peculiar remarks. When shewn the botanical garden, he inquired, "Is not *every* garden a botanical garden?" When it was proposed that they should walk in the pleasure-ground, he said, "Don't let us fatigue ourselves. Why should we walk there? Here's a fine tree; let's get on the top of it." But, upon the whole, he was very much pleased.

On Tuesday, June 5th, Johnson returned to London ; and Boswell, on the 6th, proceeded on his journey to the north. We are told by Madame D'Arblay that the Doctor repaired to Streatham, after an absence of some days. "I have very often," she writes in her diary of this period, "melancholy discourses with Dr. Johnson about our dear deceased master [Mr. Thrale], whom, indeed, he regrets incessantly." Her next mention of the Doctor which merits citation is dated "September 14th :" she says, "Doctor Johnson has been very unwell indeed. Once I was quite frightened about him ; but he continues his strange discipline—starving, mercury, opium ; and though for a time half demolished by its severity, he always, in the end, rises superior both to the disease and the remedy—which commonly is the most alarming of the two. His kindness for me, I think, if possible, still increased : he actually *bore*s every body so about me, that the folks even complain of it. I must, however, acknowledge I feel but little pity for their fatigue."

It was probably when suffering under the above malady that Johnson indited the minute which follows :

" August 9th, 3 P.M., ætat. 72, in the summer-house at Streatham. After innumerable resolutions formed and neglected, I have retired hither to plan a life of greater diligence, in hope that I may yet be useful, and be daily better prepared to appear before my Creator and my Judge, from whose infinite mercy I humbly call for assistance and support. My purpose is,—to pass eight hours every day in some serious employment. Having prayed, I purpose to employ the next six weeks upon the Italian language for my settled study."

Such resolutions for the improvement of the mind, made beneath the burden of more than threescore and ten years, augmented by that of bodily and mental affliction, are spirited indeed !

In his Prayers and Meditations, he writes on September 11th, " This is my seventy-third birthday—an awful day. I said a preparatory prayer last night, and waking early, made use in the dark, as I sat up in bed, of the prayer (beginning of this year); I rose, breakfasted, and gave thanks at church for my creation, preservation, and redemption. As I came home, I thought I had never begun any period of life so placidly. I read the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and looked into Hammond's notes. I have always been accustomed to let this day pass unnoticed, but it came this time into my mind, that some little festivity was not improper. I had a dinner, and invited Allen and Levett. My purposes are the same as on the first day of this year, to which I add hope of more frequent attendance on public worship. Participation of the Sacrament at least three times a year."

It is remarkable that Johnson,—a churchman, and one who well understood his duties and privileges—should have fixed the times of his receiving the Eucharist at the lowest number required by the Church of England; usually, it would seem, he communicated but once in the year,—a fact which suggests the thought that had he oftener partaken of that Holy Sacrament, he would not so frequently have had melancholy cause to lament his forgetfulness and neglect of his good resolutions.

Johnson quitted town on the 14th of October for Lichfield and Ashbourne, via Oxford and Birmingham. " The

motives of my journey," he writes, "I hardly know. I omitted it last year, and am not willing to miss it again. Mrs. Aston will be glad, I think, to see me. We are both old, and if I put off my visit, I may see her no more. . . . Hector is likewise an old friend, the only companion of my childhood that passed through the school with me. We have always loved one another. Perhaps we may be made better by some serious conversation, of which, however, I have no distinct hope. At Lichfield, my native place, I hope to shew a good example by frequent attendance on public worship. At Ashbourne, I hope to talk seriously with ____."

Perhaps the above blank might be accurately supplied with the name of Dr. Taylor, with whose conduct as a clergyman, Johnson, it will be remembered, was dissatisfied. He appears to have been a fair representative of the majority of the dignified clergy of the last century: a decent and hospitable country gentleman, but ignorant or careless of the solemn responsibilities of his priestly office.

During Johnson's excursion, he sent home notes of it to Mrs. Thrale, from which we select the following:

"Oxford, October 17, 1781. On Monday evening, arrived at the Angel Inn at Oxford, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Barber, without any sinister accident. I am here; but why am I here? on my way to Lichfield, where I believe Mrs. Aston will be glad to see me. We have known each other long, and, by consequence, are both old; and she is paralytic, and if I do not see her soon, I may see her no more in this world. To make a visit on such considerations is to go on a melancholy errand. But such is the course of life. . . .

"Lichfield, Oct. 20.—I wrote from Oxford, where I stayed two days. On Thursday I went to Birmingham, and was told by Hector that I should not be well so soon as I expected; but that well I should be. Mrs. Careless¹ took me under her care, and told me *when I had tea enough*. On Friday I came hither. . . . Every body here is as kind as I expected; I think Lucy [Porter] is kinder than ever. Oct. 27.—Poor Lucy's illness has left her very deaf, and, I think, very inarticulate.

¹ This lady was a clergyman's widow. Johnson once said of her to Boswell, "She was the first woman with whom I was in love. It dropped out of my head imperceptibly; but she and I always have a kindness for each other."

I can scarcely make her understand me, and she can hardly make me understand her. So here are merry doings.

“ Ashbourne, Nov. 10.—Yesterday I came to Ashbourne, and last night I had very little rest. Dr. Taylor lives on milk, and grows every day better, and is not wholly without hope. Nov. 24.—I shall leave this place about the beginning of next week ; and shall leave every place as fast as I decently can, till I get back to you, whose kindness is one of my great comforts. I am not well, but have a mind every now and then to think myself better ; and I now hope to be better under your care.

“ Lichfield, Dec. 3.—I am now come back to Lichfield,¹ where I do not intend to stay long enough to receive another letter My time passed heavily at Ashbourne ; yet I could not easily get away, though Taylor, I sincerely think, was glad to see me go. I have now learned the inconvenience of a winter campaign ; but I hope home will make amends for all my foolish sufferings.

“ Birmingham, Dec. 8.—I am come to this place on my way to London and to Streatham. I hope to be in London on Tuesday or Wednesday, and at Streatham on Thursday, by your kind conveyance. I shall have nothing to relate, either wonderful or delightful. But remember that you sent me away, and turned me out into the world ; and you must take the chance of finding me either better or worse. This you may know at present, that my affection for you is not diminished ; and my expectation from you is increased. Do not neglect me nor relinquish me. Nobody will love you better or honour you more than, madam, yours, &c.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

¹ It is related that, at this period, a gentleman of Lichfield meeting Johnson returning from a walk, inquired how far he had been ? The Doctor replied he had gone round Mr. Levett's field (the place where the scholars play), in search of a rail that he used to jump over when a boy ; and added, in a transport of joy, “ I have been so fortunate as to find it. I stood, gazing upon it some time with a degree of rapture, for it brought to my mind all my juvenile sports and pastimes, and at length I determined to try my skill and dexterity ; I laid aside my hat and wig, pulled off my coat, and leapt over it twice.”

CHAPTER XIV.

Death of Robert Levett. Johnson's lines to his memory. Letter to Langton. Letters to Boswell. Johnson visits Oxford. Miss Hannah More. Extracts from Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale. Death of Boswell's father. Johnson's remarks on this event. Johnson accompanies Mrs. Thrale to Brighton. Mr. Pepys. Argyll Street. Dr. Parr. Johnson's severe indisposition. Conversation. Johnson's enemies. The Scotch. "Complaining of the world." Origin of language. Dr. Dodd's picture. Fighting. Distinction between liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching. Johnson's estrangement from Mrs. Thrale.

THE year 1782 opened gloomily upon the eminent subject of this biography. On the 17th of January, at a time when he was less able than he had once been to sustain a shock, he was suddenly deprived of his humble pensioner Mr. Levett. In one of his memorandum-books he records: "January 20, Sunday, Robert Levett was buried in the churchyard of Bride-well, between one and two in the afternoon. He died on Thursday, 17th, about seven in the morning, by an instantaneous death. He was an old and faithful friend. I have known him from about [17] 46 . . . May GOD have mercy on him! May HE have mercy on me!"

So great was Johnson's affectionate regard for Levett, that he commemorated him in the following laudatory and pathetic verses:

Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blast or slow decline
Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levett to the grave descend;
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
 Obscurely wise and coarsely kind ;
 Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny
 Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,
 And hovering death prepared the blow,
 His vigorous remedy display'd
 The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest caverns known,
 His ready help was ever nigh,
 Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
 And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,
 No petty gains disdain'd by pride ;
 The modest wants of every day
 The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
 Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;
 And sure the eternal Master found
 His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
 Unfelt, uncounted, glided by ;
 His frame was firm, his powers were bright,
 Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
 No cold gradations of decay,
 Death broke at once the vital chain,
 And freed his soul the nearest way.

These stanzas have been extolled by Dr. Nathan Drake,¹ as beyond all praise. He says, "The wonderful powers of Johnson were never shewn to greater advantage than on this occasion, where the subject, from its obscurity and mediocrity,

¹ Author of *Essays, critical and historical, illustrative of the Rambler, Advertiser, and Idler, &c.*

seemed to bid defiance to poetical efforts : it is, in fact, warm from the heart, and is the only poem from the pen of Johnson that has been bathed with tears." The same critic remarks of the fifth of the above verses, "I am acquainted with nothing superior to it in the productions of the moral muse."

Johnson's Prayers and Meditations contain the following feeling allusion to his respected physician, Dr. Lawrence, written on the 19th of March: "Poor Lawrence has almost lost the sense of hearing ; and I have lost the conversation of a learned, intelligent, and communicative companion, and a friend whom long familiarity has much endeared. Lawrence is one of the best men that I have known."

On the 20th he addressed to Bennet Langton an epistle, in which he sorrowfully observes: "Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect and tenderness ; for such another friend the general course of human things will not suffer man to hope. I passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale ; and having idled away the summer with a weakly body and neglected mind, I made a journey to Staffordshire on the edge of winter. The season was dreary, I was sickly, and found the friends sickly whom I went to see. After a sorrowful sojourn, I returned to a habitation possessed for the present by two sick women, where my dear old friend, Mr. Levett, to whom, as he used to tell me, I owe your acquaintance, died a few weeks ago, suddenly in his bed ; there passed not, I believe, a minute between health and death. At night, at Mrs. Thrale's, as I was musing in my chamber, I thought with uncommon earnestness, that, however I might alter my mode of life, or whithersoever I might remove, I would endeavour to retain Levett about me : in the morning my servant brought me word that Levett was called to another state ; a state for which I think he was not unprepared, for he was very useful to the poor. How much soever I valued him, I now wish that I had valued him more." Eight days after penning the above, Johnson wrote in his private register: "The weather, which now begins to be warm, gives me great help. I have hardly been at church this year, certainly not since the 15th of January. My cough and difficulty of breath would not permit it. This

is the day on which, in 1752, dear Tetty died. I have now uttered a prayer of repentance and contrition; perhaps Tetty knows that I prayed for her. Perhaps Tetty is now praying for me. God help me! Thou, God, art merciful; hear my prayers, and enable me to trust in Thee!"

He addressed Boswell the same day as follows: "The pleasure which we used to receive from each other on Good-Friday and Easter-day we must be this year content to miss. Let us, however, pray for each other; and I hope to see one another yet from time to time with mutual delight I am sorry to find, what your solicitations seem to imply, that you have already gone the whole length of your credit. This is to set the quiet of your whole life at hazard. If you anticipate your own inheritance, you can at last inherit nothing; all that you receive must pay for the past. You must get a place, or pine in penury, with the empty name of a great estate. Poverty, my dear friend, is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation and so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it. Live on what you have; live if you can, on less: do not borrow either for vanity or pleasure; the vanity will end in shame, and the pleasure in regret. Stay, therefore, at home, till you have saved money enough for your journey hither."

He tells the same gentleman, in a letter dated "June 3," that he is preparing to go to Oxford for change of air, and adds: "Whether I did right in dissuading you from coming to London this spring, I will not determine. You have not lost much by missing my company; I have scarcely been well for a single week. I might have received comfort from your kindness; but you would have seen me afflicted, and perhaps found me peevish. Whatever might have been your pleasure or mine, I know not how I could have honestly advised you to come hither with borrowed money. Do not accustom yourself to consider debt only as an inconvenience; you will find it a calamity. Poverty takes away so many means of doing good, and produces so much inability to resist evil, both natural and moral, that it is by all virtuous means to be avoided. Consider a man whose fortune is very narrow, whatever be his rank by birth, or whatever his reputation by intellectual excellence, what can he do? or what evil can he prevent? That he cannot help the needy is evident; he has

nothing to spare. But perhaps his advice or admonition may be useful. His poverty will destroy his influence : many more can find that he is poor, than that he is wise ; and few reverence the understanding that is of so little advantage to its owner. I say nothing of the personal wretchedness of a debtor; which, however, has passed into a proverb. Of riches it is not necessary to write the praise. Let it, however, be remembered, that he who has money to spare has it always in his power to benefit others ; and of such power a good man must always be desirous."

Johnson fulfilled his design of going to Oxford ; and he undertook to be Miss Hannah More's cicerone there, as appears from that lady's lively narrative. " You cannot imagine," she relates, " with what delight he shewed me every part of his own college. Dr. Adams, the master, had contrived a very pretty piece of gallantry. We spent the day and evening at his house. After dinner, Johnson begged to conduct me to see the college ; he would let no one shew it me but himself. ' This was my room ; this Shenstone's.' Then, after pointing out all the rooms of the poets who had been of his college, ' In short,' said he, ' we were a nest of singing-birds. Here we walked,—there we played at cricket.' He ran over with pleasure the history of the juvenile days he passed there. When we came into the common hall, we spied a fine large print of Johnson, framed and hung up that very morning, with this motto : ' And is not Johnson ours, himself a host?' Under which stared you in the face, ' From Miss More's *Sensibility*.' This little incident amused us ;—but, alas, Johnson looks very ill indeed—spiritless and wan ! "

In the Doctor's letters to Mrs. Thrale are the following allusions to his excursion to his *alma mater* :

" Sunday, June 8, 1782.—I have this day taken a passage to Oxford for Monday—not to frisk, as you express it with very unfeeling irony, but to catch at the hopes of better health. The change of place may do something. To leave the house where so much has been suffered affords some pleasure."

" Oxford, June 12.—I find no particular salubrity in this air ; my respiration is very laborious ; my appetite is good, and my sleep commonly long and quiet ; but a very little

motion disables me. I dine to-day with Dr. Adams, and to-morrow with Dr. Wetherel. Yesterday Dr. Edwards invited some men from Exeter College, whom I liked very well. These variations of company help the mind, though they cannot do much for the body. But the body receives some help from a cheerful mind.

“ Oxford, June 17.—Oxford has done, I think, what for the present it can do; and I am going slily to take a place in the coach for Wednesday, and you or my sweet *queeny* will fetch me on Thursday, and see what you can make of me. To-day I am going to dine with Dr. Wheeler, and to-morrow Dr. Edwards has invited Miss Adams and Miss More. Yesterday I went with Dr. Edwards to his living. He has really done all that he could for my relief or entertainment, and really drives me away by doing too much.”

Boswell informed Johnson, on the 30th of August, that his father, the Lord of Auchinleck, had died that morning. Some of Johnson’s observations, elicited by this intelligence, are too excellent to be omitted here. “ You, dear sir,” he wrote, “ have now a new station, and have therefore new cares and new employments. Life, as Cowley seems to say, ought to resemble a well-ordered poem; of which one rule generally received is, that the exordium should be simple, and should promise little. Begin your new course of life with the least possible show, and the least expense possible: you may at pleasure increase both, but you cannot easily diminish them. Do not think your estate your own, while any man can call upon you for money which you cannot pay; therefore begin with timorous parsimony. Let it be your first care not to be in any man’s debt. When the thoughts are extended to a future state, the present life seems hardly worthy of all those principles of conduct and maxims of prudence which one generation of men has transmitted to another; but upon a closer view, when it is perceived how much evil is produced, and how much good is impeded, by embarrassment and distress, and how little room the expedients of poverty leave for the exercise of virtue, it grows manifest that the boundless importance of the next life enforces some attention to the interests of this.”

In October Johnson accompanied Mrs. Thrale to Brighton, whither (he records) he came in a state of so much weakness,

that he rested four times in walking between the inn and the lodging. Madame D'Arblay, who was also a guest of Mrs. Thrale's, relates that the Doctor's humour at this period was so terribly severe, that he "frightened all the people till they almost ran from him;" and that his hostess fared worse than any body. On one occasion he entered into an argument with Mr. Pepys, a master in Chancery, when his opposition was so warm, and his wit so satirical and exulting, that Madame D'Arblay "was really quite grieved to see how unamiable he appeared, and how greatly he made himself dreaded by all, and by many abhorred." The sum of the dispute was this. Wit being talked of, Mr. Pepys repeated Pope's lines upon it:

"True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd—
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

"That, sir," cried Johnson, "is a definition both false and foolish. Let wit be dressed how it will, it will equally be wit, and neither the more nor the less for any advantage dress can give it." *Pepys.* "But, sir, may not wit be so ill expressed, and so obscure, by a bad speaker, as to be lost?" *Johnson.* "The fault, then, sir, must be with the hearer. If a man cannot distinguish wit from words, he little deserves to hear it." *P.* "But, sir, what Pope means—." *J.* "Sir, what Pope means, if he mean what he says, is both false and foolish. In the first place, 'what oft was thought,' is all the worse for being often thought, because to be wit it ought to be newly thought." *P.* "But, sir, 'tis the expression makes it new." *J.* "How can the expression make it new? It may make it clear, or may make it elegant; but how new? You are confounding words with things." *P.* "But, sir, if one man says a thing very ill, may not another man say it so much better that—." *J.* "That other man, sir, deserves but small praise for the amendment; he is but the tailor to the first man's thoughts." *P.* "True, sir, he may be but the tailor; but then the difference is as great as between a man in a gold-lace suit, and a man in a blanket." *J.* "Just so, sir; I thank you for that: the difference is precisely such, since it consists neither in the gold-lace suit nor the blanket, but the man by whom they are worn."

The various contemptuous sarcasms intermixed with this

dialogue "would fill," says Madame D'Arblay, "and very unpleasantly, a quire."

Johnson and his friends exchanged the sea-breezes for the smoke and dirt of the metropolis on the 20th of November—arriving at dinner-time in Argyle Street, where Mrs. Thrale had arranged to spend the winter.

"In 1783," says Boswell of his venerable friend, "he was more severely afflicted than ever, as will appear in the course of his correspondence; but still the same ardour for literature, the same constant piety, the same kindness for his friends, and the same vivacity, both in conversation and writing, distinguish him." On the 4th of January in this year, the Doctor was invited by Mrs. Thrale to meet the celebrated classic Dr. Parr. "He came," writes Madame D'Arblay, "so very late, that we had all given him up: he was, however, very ill; and only from an extreme of kindness did he come at all. When I went up to him, to tell how sorry I was to find him so unwell, 'Ah!' he cried, taking my hand and kissing it, 'who shall ail any thing when *Cecilia*¹ is so near? Yet you do not think how poorly I am!' This was quite melancholy; and all dinner-time he hardly opened his mouth, but to repeat to me, 'Ah, you little know how ill I am!' He was excessively kind to me, in spite of all his pain; and indeed I was so sorry for him, that I could talk no more than himself. . . . After dinner he went home."

Boswell arrived in London on Friday, March 21st, and found Johnson at Mrs. Thrale's. After the first salutation, he said, "I am glad you are come; I am very ill." He looked pale, says his visitor, and was distressed with a difficulty of breathing; but after the common inquiries, he assumed his usual strong animated style of conversation. They had not been long together before he repeated his verses on Mr. Levett, with an emotion which gave them full effect; and then observed: "You must be as much with me as you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am since you came in." Johnson sent a message to acquaint Mrs. Thrale that Boswell was there. She soon appeared, and gave him an invitation to stay dinner, which he accepted. "There was no other company," he relates, "but herself and

¹ The name of a novel by Miss Burney, which had just been published.

three of her daughters, Dr. Johnson, and I. She, too, said she was very glad I was come ; for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came. . . . He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it ; but when he joined us in the drawing-room he seemed revived, and was again himself."

Talking of conversation, the sage observed, "There must in the first place be knowledge. There must be materials ; in the second place, there must be a command of words ; in the third place, there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in ; and in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures. This last is an essential requisite ; for want of it many people do not excel in conversation. Now, *I* want it ; I throw up the game upon losing a trick."

After musing for some time, he remarked, "I wonder how I should have any enemies ; for I do harm to nobody." "In the first place, sir," replied Boswell, "you will be pleased to recollect that you set out with attacking the Scotch ; so you got a whole nation for your enemies." "Why," said Johnson, "I own that by my definition of *oats* I meant to vex them." "Pray, sir," inquired Boswell, "can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch ?" "I cannot, sir," was the reply. "Old Mr. Sheridan," observed Boswell, "says it was because they sold Charles the First." "Then, sir," answered Johnson. "old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason."

At breakfast, on the 23d of March, Boswell and Mrs. Desmoulins, who made tea, talked before the Doctor of his not complaining of the world, because he was not called to some great office, nor had attained to great wealth. He flew into a violent passion, and commanded them to "have done." "Nobody," said he, "has a right to talk in this manner, to bring before a man his own character, and the events of his life, when he does not choose it should be done. I never have sought the world ; the world was not to seek me. It is rather wonderful that so much has been done for me. All the complaints which are made of the world are unjust. I never knew a man of merit neglected : it was generally by his own fault that he failed of success. A man may hide his head in a hole ; he may go into the country, and publish a book now and then, which nobody reads, and then complain

he is neglected. There is no reason why any person should exert himself for a man who has written a good book: he has not written it for any individual. I may as well make a present to the postman who brings me a letter. When patronage was limited, an author expected to find a Mæcenas, and complained if he did not find one. Why should he complain? This Mæcenas has others as good as he, or others who have got the start of him." "But surely, sir," put in Boswell, "you will allow that there are men of merit at the bar who never get practice." "Sir," replied the sage, "you are sure that practice is got from an opinion that the person employed deserves it best; so that if a man of merit at the bar does not get practice, it is from error, not from injustice. He is not neglected. A horse that is brought to market may not be bought, though he is a very good horse; but that is from ignorance, not from inattention."

"In the evening," relates Boswell, "I came to him again. He was somewhat fretful from his illness. A gentleman asked him whether he had been abroad to-day. 'Don't talk so childishly,' said he; 'you may as well ask if I hanged myself to-day.'"

Speaking, on Good Friday, April 8th, of the origin of language, Johnson affirmed, "It must have come by inspiration. A thousand, nay a million, of children could not invent a language. While the organs are pliable, there is not understanding enough to form a language; by the time that there is understanding enough, the organs are become stiff. We know that after a certain age we cannot learn to pronounce a new language. No foreigner, who comes to England when advanced in life, ever pronounces English tolerably well; at least, such instances are very rare. When I maintain that language must have come by inspiration, I do not mean that inspiration is required for rhetoric, and all the beauties of language; for when once man has a language, we can conceive that he may gradually form modifications of it. I mean only that inspiration seems to me to be necessary to give man the faculty of speech; to inform him that he may have speech; which I think he could no more find out without inspiration, than cows or hogs would think of such a faculty."

Dr. Dodd was mentioned. "A friend of mine," said Johnson, "came to me, and told me that a lady wished to

have Dr. Dodd's picture in a bracelet, and asked me for a motto. I said I could think of no better than *Currat Lex*. I was very willing to have him pardoned; that is, to have the sentence changed to transportation; but, when he was once hanged, I did not wish he should be made a saint."¹

Johnson and Boswell dined together, at the residence of the former, on Easter-day. The Doctor was unwell, talked little, grew drowsy soon after dinner, and retired. They had little further intercourse till the 28th of April, when Boswell spent a considerable part of the day with the philosopher, and the following dialogue took place. *Johnson*. "I do not see, sir, that fighting is absolutely forbidden in Scripture; I see revenge forbidden, but not self-defence." *Boswell*. "The Quakers say it is. 'Unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek offer him also the other.' *J.* "But stay, sir; the text is meant only to have the effect of moderating passion; it is plain that we are not to take it in a literal sense. We see this from the context, where there are other recommendations; which, I warrant you, the Quaker will not take literally; as, for instance, 'From him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.' Let a man whose credit is bad come to a Quaker and say, 'Well, sir, lend me a hundred pounds;' he'll find him as unwilling as any other man. . . . In 1745, my friend, Tom Cumming, the Quaker, said he would not fight, but he would drive an ammunition cart; and we know that the Quakers have sent flannel waistcoats to our soldiers, to enable them to fight better."

In reference to the distinction between liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching, Johnson said, "Consider, sir, if you have children whom you wish to educate in the principles of the Church of England, and there comes a Quaker who tries to pervert them to his principles, you would drive away the Quaker. You would not trust to the predomination of right, which you believe is in your opinions; you will keep wrong out of their heads. Now the vulgar are the children of the state. If any one attempts to teach them doctrines

¹ In answer to the question "Would *you* have pardoned Dr. Dodd?" Johnson once remarked, "Had I been placed at the head of the legislature, I should certainly have signed his death-warrant; though no law, either human or divine, forbids our deprecating punishment, either from ourselves or others."

contrary to what the state approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him." In reply to the interrogation, "Would you restrain private conversation, sir?" Johnson proceeded: "Why, sir, it is difficult to say where private conversation begins, and where it ends. If we three should discuss even the great question concerning the existence of a Supreme Being by ourselves, we should not be restrained; for that would be to put an end to all improvement. But if we should discuss it in the presence of ten boarding-school girls and as many boys, I think the magistrate would do well to put us in the stocks, to finish the debate there."

It now devolves on us to say something of Johnson's separation from Mrs. Thrale, as in the April of this year all (except epistolary) intercourse ceased between her and the lexicographer. Mrs. Thrale has assigned several reasons for this rupture. After giving one or two examples of the Doctor's combativeness, she says: "Such incidents, however, occurred too often; and I was forced to take advantage of my lost law-suit, and plead inability of purse to remain longer in London or its vicinage. I had been crossed in my intentions of going abroad, and found it convenient for every reason of health, peace, or pecuniary circumstances, to retire to Bath, where I knew Mr. Johnson would not follow me, and where I could for that reason command some little portion of time for my own use; a thing impossible while I remained at Streatham or at London, as my hours, carriage, and servants had long been at his command, who would not rise in the morning till twelve o'clock perhaps, and oblige me to make breakfast for him till the bell rang for dinner, though much displeased if the toilet was neglected, and though much of the time we passed together was spent in blaming or deriding, very justly, my neglect of economy, and waste of that money which might make many families happy.

"The original reason of our connexion; his *particularly disordered health and spirits*, had been long at an end; and he had no other ailments than old age and general infirmity, which every professor of medicine was ardently zealous and generally attentive to palliate, and to contribute all in their power for the prolongation of a life so valuable. Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first

put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr. Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last; nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more."¹

Upon a portion of the foregoing statements Baretti remarks: "It is a fact not to be denied, that, when at Streatham or in the Borough, Johnson wanted nothing else from her servants, than to be shaved once in three days, as he was almost beardless; and as for her carriage, never once during the whole time of their acquaintance did he borrow, much less *command* it, for any purpose of his own. Either she in hers, or Mr. Thrale in his, took him from town to Streatham without the least inconvenience to either; and he was brought back generally on Saturdays by Mr. Thrale, who repaired every day to the Borough about his affairs presently after breakfast. When Johnson went to them or from them in town, he constantly made use of an hackney, and would have been greatly offended had madam ever offered to order the horses out of the stable on his sole account. . . . It is not true that Dr. Johnson 'would often not rise till twelve, and oblige her to make breakfast for him till the bell rang for dinner.' It is a constant fact, that, during Johnson's acquaintance with the Thrale family, he got the habit of rising as early as other folks, nor ever made Mr. Thrale stay a single moment for his breakfast, knowing that his business called him away from the breakfast-table about ten o'clock every morning, except Sundays; nor had Mr. Thrale quitted the table a moment but the Doctor swallowed his last cup, and madam was at liberty to go about her hens and turkeys, leaving him to chat with me or any body else that happened to be there, or go up into his room, which was more usual, from whence he did not stir till dinner-time."

The real cause of the estrangement in question was Mrs. Thrale's infatuated attachment to Piozzi, whom she afterwards

¹ Boswell remarks upon the concluding sentence of the above extract: "Alas, how different is this from the declarations which I have heard Mrs. Thrale make in his lifetime, without a single murmur against any peculiarities, or against any one circumstance which attended their intimacy!"

married. Well knowing how overwhelming would be Johnson's anger and reproaches against her projected union with the Italian music-master, she resolved to banish the stern philosopher from her roof, before it should be proclaimed. Such is the unprejudiced statement of one of her most intimate friends, Madame D'Arblay, who thus describes the means by which the love-sick widow attempted to accomplish her object, and their effect upon Johnson. "This," i. e. Mrs. Thrale's above-mentioned determination, "gave to her whole behaviour towards Dr. Johnson a sort of restless petulance, of which she was sometimes hardly conscious, at others nearly reckless; but which hurt him far more than she purposed, though short of the point at which she aimed, of precipitating a change of dwelling that would elude its being cast, either by himself or the world, upon a passion that her understanding blushed to own; even while she was sacrificing to it all of inborn dignity that she had been bred to hold most sacred. Dr. Johnson, while still uninformed of an entanglement it was impossible he should conjecture, attributed her varying humours to the effect of wayward health meeting a sort of sudden wayward power; and imagined that caprices, which he judged to be partly feminine and partly wealthy, would soberise themselves away in being unnoticed. He adhered, therefore, to what he thought his post, in being the ostensible guardian protector of the relict and progeny of the late chief of the house; taking no open or visible notice of the alteration in the successor—save only at times, and when they were *tête-à-tête*, to this memorialist; to whom he frequently murmured portentous observations on the woful, nay alarming deterioration in health and disposition of her whom, so lately, he had signalled as the gay mistress of Streatham. But at length, as she became more and more dissatisfied with her own situation, and impatient for its relief, she grew less and less scrupulous with regard to her celebrated guest: she slighted his counsel; did not heed his remonstrances; avoided his society; was ready at a moment's hint to lend him her carriage when he wished to return to Bolt Court, but awaited a formal request to accord it for bringing him back. The Doctor then began to be stung; his own aspect became altered; and depression, with indignant uneasiness, sat upon his venerable front. It

was at this moment that, finding the memorialist was going one morning to St. Martin's Street, he desired a cast thither in the carriage, and then to be set down at Bolt Court. Aware of his disturbance, and far too well aware how short it was of what it would become when the cause of all that passed should be detected, it was in trembling that the memorialist accompanied him to the coach, filled with dread of offending him by any reserve, should he force upon her any inquiry; and yet impressed with the utter impossibility of betraying a trusted secret.¹

"His look was stern, though dejected, as he followed her into the vehicle; but when his eye, which, however shortsighted, was quick to mental perception, saw how ill at ease appeared his companion, all sternness subsided into an undisguised expression of the strongest emotion, that seemed to claim her sympathy, though to revolt from her compassion; while, with a shaking hand, and pointing finger, he directed her looks to the mansion from which they were driving; and when they faced it from the coach-window, as they turned into Streatham Common, tremulously exclaiming: 'That house—is lost to *me*—for ever!' During a moment he then fixed upon her an interrogative eye, that impetuously demanded: 'Do you not perceive the change I am experiencing?' A sorrowing sigh was her only answer. Pride and delicacy then united to make him leave her to her taciturnity. He was too deeply, however, disturbed to start or to bear any other subject; and neither of them uttered a single word till the coach stopped in St. Martin's Street, and the house and the carriage door were opened for their separation. He then suddenly and expressively looked at her, abruptly grasped her hand, and, with an air of affection, though in a low, husky voice, murmured rather than said, 'Good morning, dear lady!' but turned his head quickly away, to avoid any species of answer."

A short time after this affecting incident, Streatham, though not publicly relinquished, was quitted by Mrs. Thrale and her family. They first removed to Brighton, whither, as

¹This alludes to the secret of Mrs. Thrale's disgraceful attachment, which she had communicated to Madame D'Arblay.

we have stated, Johnson accompanied them : next to Argyle Street; and in April 1783, to Bath, by which last removal the widow at length succeeded in relieving herself from the upbraiding presence, and anticipated reproachful remonstrances of her venerable monitor.



CHAPTER XV.

Reading and writing. Story of Foote. Johnson's advice to Boswell. Places of worship. Johnson's paralytic attack. His interview with Miss Burney. He visits Mr. Langton. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale. His journey to Salisbury. Decease of Mrs. Williams. Dr. Priestley. Mrs. Siddons' interview with Johnson. Essex Street Club. Johnson has the asthma and dropsy. His serious conversation with Hawkins. He receives unexpected relief from the dropsy. Letter to Mrs. Thrale. Conduct of elections. Letter to Dr. Taylor. Extracts from his letters to Mrs. Thrale. Letter to his god-child. Friendships. Contradiction. Johnson goes to Oxford. Roast mutton. Coarse and refined abuse. Truth. Books. Johnson's last appearance at the Literary Club. Macbean's decease. Invention and sagacity. Johnson's projected Italian tour. Dinner at Sir Joshua Reynolds's.

BOSWELL waited on Johnson on Thursday the 1st of May ; when the sage, in the course of conversation, expressed himself as follows : " It is strange that there should be so little reading in the world, and so much writing. People in general do not willingly read, if they can have any thing else to amuse them. There must be an external impulse ; emulation, or vanity, or avarice. The progress which the understanding makes through a book has more pain than pleasure in it. Language is scanty and inadequate to express the nice gradations and mixtures of our feelings. No man reads a book of science from pure inclination. The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events. However, I have this year read all Virgil through. I read a book of the *Æneid* every night, so it was done in twelve nights, and I had a great delight in it. The *Georgics* did not give me so much pleasure, except the fourth book. The *Eclogues* I have almost by heart. I do not think the story of the *Æneid* interesting. I like the story of the *Odyssey* much better ; and this not on account of the wonderful things which it contains ; for there are wonderful things enough in the *Æneid* ;—the ships of the Trojans turned

to sea-nymphs,—the tree at Polydorus's tomb dropping blood. The story of the Odyssey is interesting, as a great part of it is domestic. It has been said, there is pleasure in writing, particularly in writing verses. I allow, you may have pleasure from writing after it is over, if you have written well; but you don't go willingly to it again. I know, when I have been writing verses, I have run my finger down the margin, to see how many I had made, and how few I had to make."

On Monday, May 26th, upon the question, "whether a man naturally virtuous, or one who has overcome wicked inclinations, is the best," Johnson said: "Sir, to *you*, the man who has overcome wicked inclinations is not the best. He has more merit to *himself*. I would rather trust my money to a man who has no hands, and so a physical impossibility to steal, than to a man of the most honest principles. There is a witty sairical story of Foote. He had a small bust of Garrick placed upon his bureau. 'You may be surprised,' said he, 'that I allow him to be so near my gold; but you will observe he has no hands.'"

"On Friday, May 29th," says Boswell, "being to set out for Scotland next morning, I passed a part of the day with him in more than usual earnestness, as his health was in a more precarious state than at any time when I had parted from him. He, however, was quick and lively, and critical, as usual." On this occasion the sage gave his fond admirer a piece of advice which deserves to be written in letters of gold: "Get as much force of mind as you can. Live within your income. Always have something saved at the end of the year. Let your imports be more than your exports; and you'll never go far wrong."

Talking of devotion he said, "Though it be true that 'God dwelleth not in temples made with hands,' yet in this state of being our minds are more piously affected in places appropriated to divine worship than in others. Some people have a particular room in their houses where they say their prayers; of which I do not disapprove, as it may animate their devotion."

The friends embraced at parting. The Doctor gave his blessing to Boswell, who quitted him with a fearful apprehension of what might happen before he revisited the metropolis.

These timorous anticipations were, alas, too well founded.

Johnson on the 16th of the ensuing month had an alarming paralytic attack, the particulars of which shall be narrated in his own words, which exhibit the resignation and composure with which this great and good man behaved under this dreadful visitation. Three days after his seizure he wrote to Mrs. Thrale as follows :

“ On Monday the 16th I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has long been my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however He might afflict my body, He would spare my understanding.¹ This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good ; I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

“ Soon after, I perceived that I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy ; and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it.

“ In order to rouse the vocal organs, I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it ; but all was vain. I then went to bed ; and strange as it may seem, I think slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, He left me my hand : I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my

¹ “ Mrs. Williams,” says Madame D’Arblay, “ related a very touching circumstance that had attended the attack. It had happened about four o’clock in the morning, when, though she knew not how, he had been sensible to the seizure of a paralytic affection. He arose, and composed, in his mind, a prayer in Latin to the ALMIGHTY, that however acute might be the pains for which he must befit himself, it would please Him, through the grace and mediation of our SAVIOUR, to spare his intellects, and to let all his sufferings fall upon his body. When he had internally conceived this petition, he endeavoured to pronounce it, according to his pious practice, aloud—but his voice was gone ! He was greatly struck, though humbly and resignedly.”

dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

"I then wrote a card to Mr. Allen,¹ that I might have a discreet friend at hand, to act as occasion should require. In penning this note I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how or why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr. Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr. Heberden; and I sent to Dr. Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly, and give me great hopes; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers, as to repeat the LORD's prayer with no imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was; but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty."

To Boswell, on July 3d, he wrote: "I have indeed had a very frightful blow. On the 17th of last month, about three in the morning, as near as I can guess, I perceived myself almost totally deprived of speech. I had no pain. My organs were so obstructed, that I could say *no*, but could scarcely say *yes*. . . . I can now speak; but the nerves are weak, and I cannot continue discourse long; but strength, I hope, will return. The physicians consider me as cured. I was last Sunday at church. On Tuesday I took an airing to Hampstead, and dined with the club. . . . I designed to go next week with Mr. Langton to Rochester, where I purpose to stay about ten days, and then try some other air. I have many kind invitations."

"No sooner," relates Madame D'Arblay, "was the invalid restored to the power of reinstating himself in his drawing-room, than the memorialist received from him a summons, which she obeyed the following morning. She was welcomed with the kindest pleasure; though it was with difficulty that he endeavoured to rise, and to mark, with wide-extended arms, his cordial gladness at her sight; and he was forced

¹ "June 17, 1783. It has pleased God this morning to deprive me of the powers of speech; and, as I do not know but that it may be His further good pleasure to deprive me soon of my senses, I request you will, on the receipt of this note, come to me, and act for me as the exigencies of my case may require.
I am, &c.
SAM. JOHNSON."

to lean back against the wainscot as, impressively, he uttered, ‘Ah, dearest of all dear ladies!’ He soon, however, recovered more strength, and assumed the force to conduct her himself, and with no small ceremony, to his best chair. ‘Can you forgive me, sir,’ she cried, when she saw that he had not breakfasted, ‘for coming so soon?’ ‘I can less forgive your not coming sooner,’ he answered, with a smile. She asked whether she might make his tea, which she had not done since they had left poor Streatham; where it had been her constant and gratifying business to give him that regale, Miss Thrale being yet too young for the office. He readily and with pleasure consented. ‘But sir,’ quoth she, ‘I am in the wrong chair.’ For it was on his own sick large arm-chair, which was too heavy for her to move, that he had formally seated her; and it was away from the table. ‘It is so difficult,’ cried he, with quickness, ‘for any thing to be wrong that belongs to you, that it can only be I that am in the wrong chair, to keep you from the right one.’ This playful good-humour was so reviving, in shewing his recovery, that though Dr. Burney could not remain above ten minutes, his daughter, for whom he sent back his carriage, could with difficulty retire at the end of two hours. Dr. Johnson endeavoured most earnestly to engage her to stay and dine with him and Mrs. Williams; but that was not in her power; though so kindly was his heart opened by her true joy at his re-establishment, that he parted from her with a reluctance that was even to both painful.”

The foregoing extract is made from Madame D’Arblay’s Memoirs of her father. In her Diary she says that the interview above described took place after Mrs. Williams’s decease, on October 29th, 1783.

Johnson’s restoration was so rapid as to allow him, in the course of July, to visit Mr. Langton at Rochester, where he stayed about a fortnight, and “made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life.” Upon his return to Bolt Court, he seems to have experienced the gloom of loneliness. He tells Mrs. Thrale, in a letter written August 13th, “I am now broken with disease, without the alleviation of familiar friendship or domestic society; I have no middle state between clamour and silence—between general conversation, and self-tormenting solitude. Levett is dead; and poor Williams is making haste to die: I know not if she will ever come out of

her chamber." A few days later, he acquaints her: "Mrs. Williams fancies now and then she grows better; but her vital powers appear to be slowly burning out. Nobody thinks, however, that she will very soon be quite wasted; and as she suffers me to be of very little use to her, I have determined to pass some time with Mr. Bowles [at Heale], near Salisbury; and have taken a place for Thursday. Some benefit may be, perhaps, received from change of air, some from change of company, and some from mere change of place. It is not easy to grow well in a chamber where one has long been sick, and where every thing seen, and every person speaking, revives and impresses images of pain. Though it be true that no man can run away from himself, yet he may escape from many causes of useless uneasiness. That *the mind is its own place*, is the boast of a fallen angel that had learned to lie. External locality has great effects—at least upon all embodied beings. I hope this little journey will afford me, at least, some suspense of melancholy."

In allusion to the pleasure which Mr. Bowles anticipated from Johnson's visit, the latter remarked to Dr. Burney, almost with a sigh: "He is so delighted, that it is really shocking!" "And why so, sir?" inquired Burney. "Why?" he replied; "because, necessarily, he must be disappointed. For if a man be expected to leap twenty yards, and should really leap ten—which would be so many more than ever were leapt before—still they would not be twenty; and consequently, Mr. Bowles, and Mr. every body else, would be disappointed."

Johnson left town for Heale on August 28th. His conveyance, as he tells Mrs. Thrale, was the common Salisbury stage, high hung, and driven to Salisbury in a day. "I was no more wearied with the journey," he writes to his physician, "than I should have been forty years ago." To an anonymous correspondent of the Monthly Magazine, who was Johnson's fellow-traveller on this occasion, we owe the following interesting memoranda: "Upon entering the stage-coach," he relates, "I perceived three gentlemen, one of whom strongly attracted my notice. He was a corpulent man, with a book in his hand, placed very near to his eyes. He had a large wig, which did not appear to have been combed for an age: his clothes were threadbare. On seating myself, he lifted up

his eyes and directed them towards me; but in an instant they resumed their former employment. I was immediately struck with his resemblance to the print of Dr. Johnson, given as a frontispiece to the Lives of the Poets; but how to gratify my curiosity, I was at a loss. I thought, from all I had heard of Dr. Johnson, that I should discover him, if by any means I could engage him in conversation. The gentleman by the side of him remarked: 'I wonder, sir, that you can read in a coach which travels so swiftly; it would make my head ache.' 'Ay, sir,' replied he, 'books make some people's heads ache.' This appeared to me Johnsonian. I knew several persons with whom Johnson was well acquainted: this was another mode of trying how far my conjecture was right. 'Do you know Miss Hannah More, sir?' 'Well, sir; the best of all the female versifiers.' This phraseology confirmed my former opinion. We now reached Hounslow, and were served with our breakfast. Having found that none of my travelling-companions knew this gentleman, I plainly put the question, 'May I take the liberty, sir, to inquire whether you be not Dr. Johnson?' 'The same, sir.' 'I am happy,' replied I, 'to congratulate the learned world that Dr. Johnson, whom the papers announced to be dangerously indisposed, is re-established in his health.' 'The civilest young man I ever met with in my life,' was his answer. From that moment he became very gracious towards me. I was then preparing to go abroad, and imagined that I could derive some useful information from a character so eminent for learning. 'What books of travels, sir, would you advise me to read previously to my setting off upon a tour to France and Italy?' 'Why, sir, as to France, I know no book worth a groat; and as to Italy, Baretti paints the fair side, and Sharp the foul; the truth, perhaps, lies between the two.' Every step which brought us nearer to Salisbury, increased my pain at the thought of leaving so interesting a fellow-traveller. I observed that at dinner he contented himself with water as his beverage. I asked him whether he had ever tasted *bumbo*, a West Indian potation, which is neither more nor less than very strong punch. 'No, sir,' said he. I made some: he tasted, and declared that if ever he drank any thing else than water, it should be *bumbo*. When the sad moment of separation at Salisbury arrived, 'Sir,' said he, 'let me see you in London,

upon your return to your native country. I am sorry that we must part. I have always looked upon it as the worst condition of man's destiny, that persons are so often torn asunder just as they become happy in each other's society."

While Johnson was at Heale, Dr. Brocklesby, the physician, informed him of the decease of Mrs. Williams. He was much affected by the news; and, in accordance with his habitual piety, immediately composed the following prayer:

" Almighty and most merciful Father, who art the Lord of life and death, who givest and who takest away; teach me to adore Thy providence, whatever Thou shalt allot me. Make me to remember, with due thankfulness, the comforts which I have received from my friendship with Anna Williams; look upon her, O LORD, with mercy; and prepare me, by Thy grace, to die with hope, and to pass by death to eternal happiness; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen."

To Mrs. Thrale, on September 22d, he wrote: "Poor Williams has, I hope, seen the end of all her afflictions. She acted with prudence, and she bore with fortitude. She has left me.

'Thou thy weary task hast done;
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.'

Had she had good humour and prompt elocution, her universal curiosity, and comprehensive knowledge, would have made her the delight of all who knew her."

Chemistry was always an interesting pursuit with Johnson. Whilst he was in Wiltshire, he attended some experiments that were made by a physician at Salisbury, on the new kinds of air. In the course of the experiments, frequent mention being made of Dr. Priestley, Johnson knit his brows, and in a stern manner inquired, "Why do we hear so much of Dr. Priestley?" He was answered, "Sir, because we are indebted to him for these important discoveries." On this, Johnson appeared well content, and replied: "Well, well, I believe we are; and let every man have the honour he has merited."

He came home on the 18th of September, to (in his own words) "a very disconsolate house—a habitation vacant and desolate;" and was shortly afterwards afflicted with the gout, and also with a complaint called a *sarcocele*, which he bore with uncommon firmness; although it was not only attended

with immediate inconvenience, but threatened him with a surgical operation. This, however, he was happily spared, by the abatement of the malady. In the autumn of this year, he received a visit from the celebrated actress, Mrs. Siddons. When she came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready for her; observing which, he said with a smile, "Madam, you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people, will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself." Having placed himself by her, he with great good humour entered upon a consideration of the English drama; and among other inquiries, particularly asked her which of Shakespeare's characters she was most pleased with. Upon her answering that she thought the character of Queen Catharine, in Henry VIII. the most natural; "I think so too, madam," said he; "and whenever you perform it, I will once more hobble out to the theatre myself." Mrs. Siddons promised she would do herself the honour of acting his favourite part for him; but many circumstances happened to prevent the representation of King Henry VIII. during the Doctor's life. In the course of the evening, he gave his opinion upon the merits of some of the principal performers whom he remembered to have seen upon the stage.¹ "Garrick, madam," said he, "was no declaimer; there was not one of his own scene-shifters who could not have spoken 'To be or not to be' better than he did; yet he was the only actor I ever saw whom I could call a master both in tragedy and comedy. A true conception of character, and natural expression of it, were his distinguished excellencies." Having expatiated, with his usual force and eloquence, on Garrick's extraordinary eminence as an actor, he concluded with this compliment to his social talents: "And after all, madam, I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table."

To relieve himself, in some measure, from the misery of solitude, Johnson at this period insisted that the surviving

¹ "Johnson," says Boswell, "had thought more upon the subject of acting than might be generally supposed. Talking of it one day to Mr. Kemble, he said, 'Are you, sir, one of those enthusiasts who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent?' Upon Mr. Kemble's answering, that he had never felt so strong a persuasion himself; 'To be sure not, sir,' said Johnson, 'the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it.'"

members of the old club in Ivy Lane should meet again and dine together; which they did, twice at a tavern, and once at his house. And to insure himself society in the evening for three days in the week, he established a conversation-club at the Essex Head, in Essex Street, then kept by an old servant of Mr. Thrale's, one Samuel Greaves, whom he wished to serve. It was held for the first time early in the winter of 1783; when Johnson, being unanimously called to the chair, surprised the members with a set of rules, drawn up by himself, and, to cite his own expression, "founded on frequency and parsimony."

At this club the Doctor, when his health permitted, was a constant attendant, and seemed to reserve his spirits and conversation for its meetings.

Towards the close of this year (Dec. 13th), he was seized with a spasmodic asthma of such violence, that he was confined to his house in great pain, being sometimes obliged to sit all night in a chair, a recumbent posture being so hurtful to his respiration that he could not lie in bed. The constant bleeding which he underwent for the alleviation of this malady, brought upon him, at the same time, that grievous complaint the dropsy. His illness was probably aggravated by the unusual severity of the weather, and Mrs. Desmoulins was herself so very ill that she could contribute very little to his relief. "He, however," relates Boswell, "had none of that unsocial shyness which we commonly see in people afflicted with sickness. He did not hide his head from the world, in solitary abstraction: he did not deny himself to the visits of his friends and acquaintances; but at all times, when he was not overcome by sleep, was as ready for conversation as in his best days."

The year 1784, the last of his mortal course, did not open auspiciously on the illustrious sufferer, who, in a letter dated February 11th, informed the anxious Boswell that "his asthma had then confined him to the house eight or nine weeks, and gave him no hopes of a release." He adds: "A dropsy gains ground upon me: my legs and thighs are very much swollen with water, which I should be content if I could keep there; but I am afraid that it will soon be higher. My nights are very sleepless and very tedious; but yet I am extremely afraid of dying."

While in the frame of mind just described, Johnson sent for Sir John Hawkins, told him he was desirous of making a will, and requested him to be one of his executors. "Upon my consenting," relates Hawkins, "he gave me to understand that he meant to make a provision for his servant Frank, of about 70*l.* a-year for his life, and concerted with me a plan for investing a sum sufficient for the purpose: at the same time he opened to me the state of his circumstances, and the amount of what he had to dispose of. In a visit," he continues, "which I made him in a few days, I found him labouring under great dejection of mind. He bade me draw near him, and said he wanted to enter into a serious conversation with me; and upon my expressing a willingness to join in it, he, with a look that cut me to the heart, told me that he had the prospect of death before him, and that he dreaded to meet his SAVIOUR. I could not but be astonished at such a declaration, and advised him, as I had done once before, to reflect on the course of his life, and the services he had rendered to the cause of religion and virtue, as well by his example as his writings; to which he answered, that he had written as a philosopher, but had not lived like one. In the estimation of his offences he reasoned thus: 'Every man knows his own sins, and also what grace he has resisted. But to those of others, and the circumstances under which they were committed, he is a stranger: he is, therefore, to look to himself as the greatest sinner that he knows of.' At the conclusion of this argument, which he strongly enforced, he uttered this passionate exclamation,—' Shall I, who have been a teacher of others, myself be a cast-away?'

"Much to the same purpose passed between us in this and other conversations which I had with him; in all which I could not but wonder, as much at the freedom with which he opened his mind, and the compunction he seemed to feel for the errors of his past life, as I did at his making choice of me for his confessor."

On the 19th of February Johnson received sudden and unexpected relief from the more dangerous of his complaints. It came, as he believed, by an immediate interposition of Divine Providence, at a time when he had shut himself up,¹ and

¹ "To prevent interruption," says Hawkins, "he had in the morning ordered Frank not to admit any one to him; and the better to enforce the

engaged in particular devotional exercises, fasting, humiliation, and prayer. By the 10th of March he was so far recovered as to be able to tell Mrs. Porter, "My asthma is seldom troublesome, and my dropsy has run itself almost away, in a manner which my physician says is very uncommon. I have been confined from the 14th of December, and shall not soon venture abroad: but I have this day dressed myself as I was before my sickness."

To Mrs. Thrale he wrote on the 20th as follows :

"MADAM,—Your last letter had something of tenderness. The accounts which you have had of my danger and distress were, I suppose, not aggravated. I have been confined ten weeks with an asthma and dropsy. But I am now better. GOD has, in His mercy, granted me a reprieve; for how much time His mercy must determine. . . . Write to me no more about *dying with a grace*. When you feel what I have felt in approaching eternity—in fear of soon hearing the sentence of which there is no revocation—you will know the folly: my wish is, that you may know it sooner. The distance between the grave and the remotest part of human longevity is but a very little; and of that little no path is certain. You know all this, and I thought that I knew it too; but I know it now with a new conviction. May that new conviction not be vain! I am now cheerful. I hope this approach to recovery is a token of Divine mercy."

Eight days later Boswell sent Johnson information of his design of being a candidate to represent his county in parliament; upon which the philosopher, in a letter dated "March 30," excellently observed : "You are entering upon a transaction which requires much prudence. You must endeavour to oppose without exasperating; to practise temporary hostility without producing enemies for life. This is, perhaps, hard to be done; yet it has been done by many, and seems most likely to be effected by opposing merely upon general principles, without descending to personal or particular censures or objections. One thing I must enjoin you, which is seldom observed in the conduct of elections: I must entreat

charge, had added these awful words, 'For your master is preparing himself to die.'"

you to be scrupulous in the use of strong liquors. One night's drunkenness may defeat the labours of forty days well employed. Be firm, but not clamorous; be active, but not malicious; and you may form such an interest as may not only exalt yourself, but dignify your family."

On the 12th of April he addressed his old schoolfellow, Taylor, in the following melancholy strain :

" What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you ? I hope nothing disables you from writing. What I have seen, and what I have felt, gives me reason to fear every thing. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing, that after all my losses, I have yet a friend left.

" I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless. Though it has pleased God wonderfully to deliver me from the dropsy, I am yet very weak, and have not passed the door since the 13th of December. I hope for some help from warm weather, which will surely come in time.

" I could not have the consent of the physicians to go to church yesterday [Easter-day]; I therefore received the holy Sacrament at home, in the room where I communicated with dear Mrs. Williams a little before her death. O my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful ! I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let us learn to derive our hope only from God. In the mean time, let us be kind to one another. I have no friend now living but you and Mr. Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect, dear sir, yours affectionately,

" SAM. JOHNSON."

The next epistles from which we shall quote are to Mrs. Thrale, and of a less sombre character :

" April 21.—I make haste to send you intelligence, which, if I do not flatter myself, you will not receive without some degree of pleasure. After a confinement of one hundred and twenty-nine days, more than the third part of a year, and no inconsiderable part of human life, I this day returned thanks to God in St. Clement's Church for my recovery ; a recovery,

in my seventy-fifth year, from a distemper which few in the vigour of youth are known to surmount; a recovery, of which neither myself, my friends, nor my physicians, had any hope; for though they flattered me with some continuance of life, they never supposed that I could cease to be dropsical. The dropsy, however, is quite vanished; and the asthma so much mitigated that I walked to-day with a more easy respiration than I have known, I think, for perhaps two years past. I hope the mercy that lightens my days will assist me to use them well.

“April 26.—On Saturday I shewed myself again to the living world at the exhibition: much and splendid was the company, but, like the Doge of Genoa at Paris, I admired nothing but myself. I went up all the stairs to the pictures without stopping to rest or to breathe; ‘in all the madness of superfluous health.’ The Prince of Wales had promised to be there; but when we had waited an hour and a half, sent us word that he could not come.”

What follows is a beautiful specimen of his fatherly gentleness to a young lady, his godchild, one of the daughters of Mr. Langton, and then in her seventh year. He took the trouble to write it in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters, that she might have the gratification of reading it herself:

“ May 10th, 1784.

“MY DEAREST MISS FANNY,—I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well; and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic; and above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers and read your Bible. I am, my dear, your most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

Johnson was cheered by the arrival of Boswell in London on the 5th of May. They met at the houses of several friends,

who seem to have, as it were, celebrated the Doctor's recovery by a round of dinners. One of Johnson's little manuscript diaries about this time contains a brief memorandum, which shews his amiable disposition more certainly than a thousand studied declarations: "Afternoon spent cheerfully and elegantly, I hope without offence to God or man; though in no holy duty, yet in the general exercise and cultivation of benevolence."

Johnson and Boswell passed a part of the evening of May 19th alone. The latter remarked, that "the death of our friends might be a consolation against the fear of our own dissolution, because we might have more friends in the other world than in this." He perhaps felt this as a reflection upon his apprehension as to death, and warmly replied, "How can a man know *where* his departed friends are, or whether they will be his friends in the other world? How many friendships have you known formed upon principles of virtue? Most friendships are formed by caprice or by chance—mere confederacies in vice or leagues in folly." They talked of Mr. Langton. He said, "I know not who will go to heaven, if Langton does not;" but proceeded to accuse him of want of judgment upon an interesting occasion. "When I was ill," he observed, "I desired he would tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty. Sir, he brought me a sheet of paper on which he had written down several texts of Scripture recommending Christian charity. And when I questioned him, what occasion I had given for such an animadversion,¹ all that he could say amounted to this,—that I sometimes contradicted people in conversation. Now what harm does it do to any man to be contradicted?" "I suppose," answered Boswell, "he meant the *manner* of doing it; roughly and harshly." "And who," asked Johnson, "is the worse for that?" "It hurts people of weaker nerves," was the reply. "I know no such weak-nerved people," rejoined the philosopher. Burke, upon hearing a relation of this dialogue, remarked, "It is well if, when a man comes to die, he has nothing heavier

¹ "Johnson," says Boswell, "at the time when the paper was presented to him, though at first pleased with the attention of his friend, whom he thanked in an earnest manner, soon exclaimed, in a loud and angry tone, 'What is your drift, sir?' Sir Joshua Reynolds pleasantly observed, that it was a scene for a comedy, to see a penitent get into a violent passion, and belabour his confessor."

upon his conscience than having been a little rough in conversation."

On June 3d, the sage, with Boswell for his companion, went by the post-coach to Oxford. At the inn where they stopped on the way, he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which they had for dinner, and scolded the waiter, saying, "It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-drest." He bore the journey very well, and seemed to feel himself elevated as he approached his Alma Mater, "that magnificent and venerable seat of learning, orthodoxy, and toryism." His servant Frank came in the "heavy coach," in readiness to attend him; and the travellers were hospitably received at the residence of Dr. Adams, the master of Pembroke College. Here Johnson remained till the 16th of June. He was well contented with the "board and lodging" provided by his worthy host, and appears to have agreed with Boswell, that "there was something exceedingly pleasing in leading a college life, without restraint, and with superior elegance, in consequence of living in the master's house, and having the company of ladies." During this visit his conversational powers were as vigorous as ever, as will appear from the following specimens of his discourse at this period, selected from those portions of it which Boswell has preserved. On that gentleman's position, that "if members of parliament must attack each other personally in the heat of debate, it should be done more genteelly," he said, "No, sir; that would be much worse. Abuse is not so dangerous when there is no vehicle of wit and delicacy, no subtle conveyance. The difference between coarse and refined abuse is as the difference between being bruised by a club, and wounded by a poisoned arrow." In reference to the casuistical question, "whether it was allowable at any time to depart from *truth*?" he remarked, "The general rule is, that truth should never be violated, because it is of the utmost importance to the comfort of life that we should have a full security by mutual faith; and occasional inconveniences should be willingly suffered that we may preserve it. There must, however, be some exceptions. If, for instance, a murderer should ask you which way a man is gone, you may tell him what is not true, because you are under a previous obligation not to betray a man to a murderer." "Supposing,"

inquired Boswell, “the person who wrote *Junius* were asked whether he was the author, might he deny it?” Johnson. “I don’t know what to say to this. If you were *sure* that he wrote *Junius*, would you, if he denied it, think as well of him afterwards? Yet it may be urged, that what a man has no right to ask, you may refuse to communicate; and there is no other effectual mode of preserving a secret, and an important secret, the discovery of which may be very hurtful to you, but a flat denial; for if you are silent, or hesitate, or evade, it will be held equivalent to a confession. But stay, sir, here is another case. Supposing the author had told me confidentially that he had written *Junius*, and I were asked if he had, I should hold myself at liberty to deny it, as being under a previous promise, express or implied, to conceal it. Now, what I ought to do for the author, may I not do for myself? But I deny the lawfulness of telling a lie to a sick man, for fear of alarming him. You have no business with consequences; you are to tell the truth. Besides, you are not sure what effect your telling him that he is in danger may have. It may bring his distemper to a crisis, and that may cure him. Of all lying, I have the greatest abhorrence of this, because I believe it has been frequently practised upon myself.” Alluding to the printed recommendation of a clergyman to his pupil, to read to the end of whatever books he should begin the perusal of, the Doctor observed: “This is surely a strange advice: you may as well resolve, that whatever men you happen to get acquainted with, you are to keep to them for life. A book may be good for nothing, or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing; are we to read it all through?”

Boswell and Johnson returned to London on the 16th of June; and on the 22d, the latter dined, and for the last time, at the Literary Club. “He looked ill,” records Boswell; “but had such a manly fortitude, that he did not trouble the company with melancholy complaints. They all shewed evident marks of kind concern about him, with which he was much pleased, and he exerted himself to be as entertaining as his indisposition allowed him.”

Anxious to leave no means untried by which the life of the great moralist might be prolonged, his friends planned for him a retreat from the severity of a British winter to the mild climate of Italy. To accomplish this, it was necessary to

obtain such an augmentation of his income as would be sufficient to defray the expenses of travel, &c., in a manner becoming “the first literary character of a great nation.” Boswell consulted Sir Joshua Reynolds upon this subject; and the result of their conference was a letter by the former to the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, stating the case, and requesting his lordship’s good offices for Dr. Johnson.

On the 26th of June, the Doctor addressed the following note to Mrs. Thrale :

“A message came to me yesterday, to tell me that Macbean was dead, after three days of illness. He was one of those who, as Swift says, *stood as a screen between me and death*. He has, I hope, made a good exchange. He was very pious; he was very innocent; he did no ill; and of doing good a continual tenour of distress allowed him few opportunities: he was very highly esteemed in the [Charter] House.”¹

The next day the philosopher dined at Reynolds’s. After dinner he entered upon a curious discussion of the difference between intuition and sagacity; one being immediate in its effect, the other requiring a circuitous process; one, he observed, was the *eye* of the mind, the other the *nose* of the mind. A “young gentleman” present took up the argument against him, and maintained that no man ever thinks of the *nose of the mind*,—“not adverting,” remarks Boswell, “that though that figurative sense seems strange to us, as very unusual, it is only not more forced than Hamlet’s ‘in my mind’s eye, Horatio.’” He persisted much too long, and appeared to Johnson as putting himself forward as his antagonist with too much presumption; upon which he called to him in a loud tone: “What is it you are contending for, if you *be* contending?” And afterwards, imagining that the gentleman retorted upon him with a “kind of smart drollery,” he said, “It does not become you to talk so to me. Besides, ridicule is not your talent; you have *there* neither intuition nor sagacity.” The gentleman protested that he intended no improper freedom, but had the greatest respect for his opponent. After a short pause, Johnson said, “Give me your hand, sir. You were too tedious, and I was too short.” “Sir,” was the reply,

¹ Into which Johnson had procured his admission.

"I am honoured by your attention." "Come, sir," answered Johnson, "let's have no more of it. We offended one another by our contention; let us not offend the company by our compliments."

On Monday, June 28th, Boswell received a letter from Lord Thurlow, in which his lordship remarked: "I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr. Johnson's merit. But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it will be proper to ask; in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health."

This communication afforded much pleasure to Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds; and the latter suggested that Johnson should be invited to dine at his house, in order that they three might talk over the Doctor's Italian tour, and "have it all out." Boswell hastened to the illustrious invalid (who was ignorant that any application had been made to Thurlow in his behalf), gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor's epistle. He listened with much attention; then warmly said, "This is taking prodigious pains about a man." "O sir," replied Boswell, affectionately, "your friends would do every thing for you." He paused,—grew more and more agitated,—till tears started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with fervent emotion, "God bless you all!" "I was so affected," relates his companion, "that I also shed tears. After a short silence, he renewed and extended his grateful benediction, 'God bless you all, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.' We both remained for some time unable to speak. He rose suddenly and quitted the room, quite melted in tenderness. He stayed but a short time, till he had recovered his firmness; soon after he returned I left him, having first engaged him to dine at Sir Joshua Reynolds's next day. I never was again under that roof which I had so long reverenced."

"On Wednesday, June 30th," continues Boswell, "the friendly confidential dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds took place, no other company being present. Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world the

conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected. When I now look back to it, I am vexed that a single word should have been forgotten. . . . I accompanied him in Sir Joshua Reynolds's coach to the entry of Bolt Court. He asked me whether I would not go with him to his house ; I declined it, from an apprehension that my spirits would sink. We bade adieu to each other affectionately in the carriage. When he had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, ‘ Fare you well !’ and, without looking back, sprang away with a kind of pathetic briskness, if I may use that expression, which seemed to indicate a struggle to conceal uneasiness, and impressed me with a foreboding of our long, long separation.”

Boswell remained one day more in town, and quitted it without having another interview with Dr. Johnson.



CHAPTER XVI.

Johnson's letter to Mrs. Thrale on her second marriage. His letter to Lord Thurlow. Epitaph on his wife. Excursion to Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Chatsworth. Lunardi's balloon. Johnson does penance at Uttoxeter. A learned pig. Miss Seward and Johnson. Prayer "against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts." Johnson's conversation with Miss Burney. His will. Prospect of dissolution. Scruples. Petty self-accusation. "Letters in the grave." Satirical poem by Johnson.

SHORTLY after the parting described at the close of the last chapter, Johnson had the mortification of being informed by Mrs. Thrale, that "what she supposed he never believed" was true, namely, that she was actually going to marry Signor Piozzi, the Italian singer. His reply to the letter which contained this information is as follows :

"London, July 8, 1784.

"DEAR MADAM,—What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me: I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

"I wish that GOD may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

"Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon M. Piozzi to settle in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons,

but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy. I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain; yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

"When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrew's, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremovable stream that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection, pressed her to return. The queen went forward. If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther! The tears stand in my eyes. I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes; for I am, with great affection, yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

It is related, that when Johnson was first apprised of Mrs. Thrale's second marriage, he was dumb with surprise for some moments; at last, recovering himself, he exclaimed with great emotion, "*Varium et mutabile semper famina!*" Subsequently (according to Sir John Hawkins), he observed in reference to the above *mésalliance*, "Poor Thrale! I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over, and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget or pity."

"By a letter," remarks Boswell, "from Sir Joshua Reynolds, I was informed that the Lord Chancellor had called on him, and acquainted him that the application [for the increase of Johnson's income] had not been successful; but that his lordship desired Sir Joshua to let him know, that on granting a mortgage of his pension, he should draw on his lordship to the amount of five or six hundred pounds." Johnson's feelings upon receiving this message from Lord Thurloe will appear from his letter to that personage.

"September, 1784.

✓ "MY LORD,—After a long and not inattentive observation of mankind, the generosity of your lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty, so liberally be-

stowed, I should gladly receive, if my condition made it necessary; for to such a mind, who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased God to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your lordship should be told of it by Sir Joshua Reynolds as an event very uncertain; for if I grew much better, I should not be willing, if much worse, not able, to migrate. Your lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but when I was told that you were pleased to honour me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; yet, as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and from your lordship's kindness I have received a benefit which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live *mihi carior*, with a higher opinion of my own merit. I am, my lord, &c.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

From the period at which he wrote the above, the Doctor seems to have relinquished all thoughts of making a tour to Italy. “If I am worse,” he said to his friends, “I cannot go; if I am better, I need not go; but if I continue neither better nor worse, I am as well as I am.”

Some few weeks previously to the date of his letter to the Lord Chancellor, Johnson addressed a note to the incumbent of Bromley, soliciting permission to “lay a stone,” with an inscription,¹ upon the grave of his “dear wife.” On the 13th

¹ The inscription was as follows :

Hic conduntur reliquiae
 ELIZABETHÆ,
 Antiqua Jarvisiorum gente
 Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ;
 Formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ;
 Uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER,
 Secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON;
 Qui multum amatam, diuque defletam
 Hoc lapide contexit.
 Obiit Londini, mense Mart.
 A.D. MDCCCLII.

of July, the day after he made this request, he set out on an excursion to Staffordshire and Derbyshire, in the hope that change of scene might be beneficial to his broken constitution. In a letter, dated Ashbourne, July 20th, he informs his physician, Dr. Brocklesby : “ The journey of the first day was performed with very little sense of fatigue ; the second day brought me to Lichfield without much lassitude ; but I am afraid that I could not have borne such violent agitation for many days together. . . . I stayed five days at Lichfield, but being unable to walk, had no great pleasure ; and yesterday (19th) I came hither, where I am to try what air and attention can perform. Of any improvement in my health I cannot yet please myself with the perception.” Six days later he wrote to Boswell : “ On the 14th I came to Lichfield, and found every body glad enough to see me. On the 20th, I came hither, and found a house half-built, of very uncomfortable appearance ; but my own room has not been altered. That a man worn with diseases, in his seventy-second or third year, should condemn part of his remaining life to pass among ruins and rubbish, and that no inconsiderable part, appears very strange. I know that your kindness makes you impatient to know the state of my health, in which I cannot boast of much improvement. I came through the journey without much inconvenience ; but when I attempt self-motion, I find my legs weak and my breath very short : this day I have been much disordered. I have no company ; the Doctor [Taylor] is busy in his fields, and goes to bed at nine ; and his whole system is so different from mine, that we seem formed for different elements ; I have therefore all my amusement to seek within myself.” On the 14th of August he told Dr. Brocklesby, “ I have hitherto sent you only melancholy letters ; but you will be glad to hear some better account. Yesterday the asthma remitted, perceptibly remitted ; and I moved with more ease than I have enjoyed for many weeks. May GOD continue His mercy ! This account I would not delay, because I am not a lover of complaints or complainers ; and yet I have, since we parted, uttered nothing till now but terror and sorrow.” He inquires of the same gentleman, on the 9th of September, “ Do you know the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire ? And have you ever seen Chatsworth ? I was at Chatsworth on Monday : I had seen it before, but never when its owners were at home :

I was very kindly received, and honestly pressed to stay: but I told them that a sick man is not a fit inmate of a great house. But I hope to go again some time." A few days afterwards, in a letter to the same individual, he alludes, among other matters, to the first ascent in a balloon ever witnessed in England, which had been made by Lunardi on the 15th of September, 1784. "On one day," he writes, "I had three letters about the air-balloon: yours was far the best, and has enabled me to impart to my friends in the country an idea of this species of amusement. In amusement, mere amusement, I am afraid it must end; for I do not find that its course can be directed so as that it should serve any purposes of communication; and it can give no new intelligence of the state of the air at different heights, till they have ascended above the height of mountains, which they seem never likely to do. I came hither [Lichfield] on the 27th. How long I shall stay I have not determined. My dropsy is gone, and my asthma is much remitted, but I have felt myself a little declining these two days, or at least to-day; but such vicissitudes must be expected. One day may be worse than another; but this last month is far better than the former: if the next should be as much better than this, I shall run about the town on my own legs." On October 25th, he tells Dr. Brocklesby: "You write to me with a zeal that animates, and a tenderness that melts me. I am not afraid either of a journey to London, or a residence in it. I came down with little fatigue, and am now not weaker. In the smoky atmosphere I was delivered from the dropsy, which I consider as the original and radical disease. The town is my element: there are my friends, there are my books, to which I have not yet bid farewell, and there are my amusements. Sir Joshua told me long ago, that my vocation was to public life; and I hope still to keep my station, till God shall bid me *Go in peace.*"

Johnson remained at Lichfield till the second or third week in November. The record of his conversation and proceedings during (as it proved) his last visit to his native city, is but scanty. An anecdote of him at this period is given in Warner's *Tour through the Northern Counties of England*, which we will relate here, although we are of opinion that the event to which it refers did not take place at the time to which Mr. Warner ascribes it, but during one of Johnson's former

sojourns at Lichfield, a few years previously. The friends with whom the Doctor was staying missed him one morning at the breakfast-table. On inquiring after him of the servants, they understood he had set off from Lichfield at a very early hour, without mentioning to any of the family whither he was going. The day passed without the return of the illustrious guest, and the party began to be very uneasy on his account, when, just before the supper-hour, the door opened, and the Doctor stalked into the room. A solemn silence of a few minutes ensued, nobody daring to inquire the cause of his absence, which was at length relieved by Johnson addressing the lady of the house in the following manner: "Madam, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my departure from the house this morning; but I was constrained to it by my conscience. Fifty years ago, madam, on this day, I committed a breach of filial piety, which has ever since lain heavy on my mind, and has not till this day been expiated. My father, you recollect, was a bookseller, and had long been in the habit of attending Uttoxeter market, and opening a stall for the sale of his books during that day. Confined to his bed by indisposition, he requested me, this time fifty years ago, to visit the market, and attend the stall in his place. But, madam, my pride prevented me from doing my duty, and I gave my father a refusal. To do away the sin of this disobedience, I this day went in a postchaise to Uttoxeter; and going into the market at the time of high business, uncovered my head, and stood with it bare an hour before the stall which my father had formerly used, exposed to the sneers of the standers-by and the inclemency of the weather; a penance by which, I trust, I have propitiated Heaven for this only instance, I believe, of contumacy towards my father."

The following particulars respecting Johnson at the last time of his being in Lichfield are stated on the authority of Miss Seward. "I told him," she narrates, "in one of my latest visits to him, of a wonderful learned pig which I had seen at Nottingham; and which did all that we have observed exhibited by dogs and horses: the subject amused him. 'Then,' said he, 'the pigs are a race unjustly calumniated. *Pig* has, it seems, not been wanting to *man*, but *man* to *pig*. We do not allow *time* for his education; we kill him at a year old.' Mr. Henry White [a young clergyman], who was pre-

sent, observed that if this instance had happened in or before Pope's time, he would not have been justified in instancing the swine as the lowest degree of grovelling instinct. Dr. Johnson seemed pleased with the observation; while the person who made it proceeded to remark, that great torture must have been employed, ere the indocility of the animal could have been subdued. ‘Certainly,’ said the Doctor; ‘but,’ turning to me, ‘how old is your pig?’ I told him, three years old. ‘Then,’ said he, ‘the pig has no cause to complain; he would have been killed the first year if he had not been *educated*, and protracted existence is a good recompense for very considerable degrees of torture.’ “I have lately,” writes the same lady, “been in the almost daily habit of contemplating a very melancholy spectacle. The great Johnson is here, labouring under the paroxysms of a disease which must speedily be fatal. He shrinks from the consciousness with the extremest horror. It is by his repeatedly expressed desire that I visit him often; yet I am sure he neither does, nor ever did, feel much regard for me; but he would fain escape for a time, in any society, from the terrible idea of his approaching dissolution. . . . A few days since, I was to drink tea with him, by his request, at Mrs. Porter’s. When I went into the room, he was in a deep but agitated slumber, in an arm-chair. Opening the door with that caution due to the sick, he did not awaken at my entrance. I stood by him several minutes, mournfully contemplating the temporary suspension of those vast intellectual powers which must soon, as to this world, be eternally quenched. Upon the servant entering to announce the arrival of a gentleman of the university, introduced by Mr. White, he awoke with convulsive starts; but, rising with more alacrity than could have been expected, he said, ‘Come, my dear lady, let you and I attend these gentlemen in the study.’ He received them with more than usual complacence; but whimsically chose to get astride upon his chair-seat, with his face to its back, keeping a trotting motion as if on horseback; but in this odd position he poured forth streams of eloquence, illumined by frequent flashes of wit and humour, without any tincture of malignity. His memory is considerably impaired, but his eloquence rolls on in its customary majestic torrent, when he speaks at all. My heart aches to see him labour for his breath, which he draws with great effort. It is not impro-

bable that this literary comet may set where it rose, and Lichfield receive his pale and stern remains."

The closing assertion of the above extract was not to be verified. From Lichfield Johnson went to Birmingham, where he passed a few days with his old schoolfellow Mr. Hector, who records that "the Doctor was very solicitous with me to recollect some of our most early transactions, and transmit them to him, for I perceived nothing gave him greater pleasure than calling to mind those days of our innocence. I complied with his request, and he only received them a few days before his death." The invalid proceeded from Birmingham to Oxford, where he was again kindly received by Dr. Adams. He arrived in London on the 16th of November.

While in the country, notwithstanding his many infirmities, he translated an ode of Horace (lib. iv. ode vii.), which is printed in his works, and composed several prayers, of which one, *Against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts*, is styled by Boswell "so wise and energetic, so philosophical and so pious, that I doubt not of its affording consolation to many a sincere Christian when in a state of mind to which I believe the best are sometimes liable." It is as follows:

"O LORD, my Maker and Protector, who hast graciously sent me into this world to work out my salvation; enable me to drive from me all such unquiet and perplexing thoughts as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which Thou hast required. When I behold the works of Thy hands, and consider the course of Thy providence, give me grace always to remember that Thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor Thy ways my ways. And while it shall please Thee to continue me in this world, where much is to be done, and little to be known, teach me by Thy HOLY SPIRIT to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous inquiries, from difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which Thou hast imparted; let me serve Thee with active zeal and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which Thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O LORD, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen."

Shortly after the philosopher's return home, both the asthma and dropsy became more violent and afflicting. Still his love of literature did not fail. During his sleepless nights

he amused himself by translating into Latin verse, from the Greek, many of the epigrams in the *Anthologia*. A very few days before his decease he transmitted to Mr. John Nichols a list of the authors of the *Universal History*, mentioning their several shares in that publication.

Madame D'Arblay (or rather Miss Burney, as she did not change her maiden name till long after this period,) called on Dr. Johnson, at Bolt Court, on the 25th of November. "He let me in," she records, "though very ill. He was alone; and I had a more satisfactory and entertaining conversation with him than I had had for many months past. He was in better spirits, too, than I had lately seen him. He owned, nevertheless, that his nights were grievously restless and painful; and told me that he was going, by medical advice, to try what sleeping out of town might do for him. And then, with a smile, but a smile of more sadness than mirth, he added, 'I remember that my wife, when she was near her end, poor woman! was also advised to sleep out of town: and when she was carried to the lodging that had been prepared for her, she complained that the staircase was in very bad condition; for the plaster was beaten off the walls in many places. 'Oh,' said the man of the house, 'that's nothing; it's only the knocks against it of the coffins of the poor souls that have died in the lodging.' He forced," continues Madame D'Arblay, "a faint laugh at the man's brutal honesty; but it was a laugh of ill-disguised, though checked, secret anguish.

"I felt inexpressibly shocked both by the prospective and retrospective view of this relation; but, desirous to confine my words to the literal story, I only exclaimed against the man's unfeeling *absurdity* in making so unnecessary a confession. 'True,' he cried; 'such a confession to a person then mounting his stairs for the recovery of her health, or rather for the preservation of her life, contains indeed more absurdity than we can well lay our account to.' We then talked of poor Mrs. Thrale, but only for a moment: 'I drive her,' he said, 'quite from my mind. If I meet with one of her letters, I burn it instantly. I have burnt all I can find. I never speak of her, and I never desire to hear of her more.'" "Wholly to change this discourse," Madame D'Arblay alluded to a humble votary of the Muses, who was at that time zealously patronised by Hannah More. "I told him," she relates,

"the tales I had heard of her writing so wonderfully, though she had read nothing but Young and Milton ; 'though these,' I continued, 'could never possibly, I should think, be the first authors with any body. Could a child understand them ? And grown persons, who have never read are, in literature, children still.' 'Doubtless,' he answered ; 'but there is nothing so little comprehended as what is genius. They give to it all, when it can be but a part. . . . Genius is, in fact, *knowing the use of tools*. But there must be tools, or how use them ? A man who has spent all his life in this room will give a very poor account of what is contained in the next.' 'Certainly, sir ; and yet there is such a thing as invention. Shakespeare could never have seen a Caliban.' 'No ; but he had seen a man, and knew how to vary him to a monster. A person who could draw a monstrous cow must know first what a cow commonly is ; or how can he tell that to give her an ass's head or an elephant's tusk will make her monstrous ? Suppose you shew me a man who is a very expert carpenter ; and an admiring stander-by exclaims, 'O, he was born a carpenter !' What would have become of that birthright if he had never seen any wood ? Let two men, one with genius, the other with none, look together at an overturned waggon : he who has no genius will think of the waggon only as he then sees it, that is to say, overturned, and walk on : he who has genius will give it a glance of examination, that will paint it to his imagination such as it was previously to its being overturned—standing still, and moving on, and heavy loaded, and empty ; but both alike must see the waggon to think of it at all.' He then," proceeds our memorialist, "animated and talked on, with as much fire, spirit, wit, and truth of criticism and judgment, as ever yet I had heard him display. Yet all brilliant as he was, I saw a palpable increase of suffering in the midst of his sallies ; and offered to go ; an offer which, for the first time, he did not oppose ; but taking and most affectionately pressing both my hands, 'Be not,' he said, in a voice of even melting tenderness and concern, 'be not longer in coming again for my letting you go now !' I eagerly assured him I would come the sooner, and was running off ; but he called me back, and in a solemn voice, and a manner the most energetic, said, 'Remember me in your prayers !' I longed to ask him so to remember me, but did not dare. I merely,

in a low voice, and I am sure a troubled accent, uttered an instant and heartfelt assurance of obedience ; and then, very heavily indeed in spirits, I left him."¹

Notwithstanding that Johnson had consulted Sir John Hawkins in reference to his "last testament," as was stated in a former page of this volume, he delayed making it from time to time, although Sir John had frequently remonstrated with him on his procrastination in the affair, and had gone so far as to draw up a draft of a will, with blanks for the names of the executors and residuary legatee, and directions in what manner it was to be executed and attested. A little while after the return of Johnson from his last visit to Oxford, he executed the draft, the blanks remaining, with all the solemnities of a real will ; and thus, for some time, the matter rested.

Two days after Miss Burney's interview with the Doctor on the 27th of November, Hawkins went in the morning to his residence, with a design "still farther to urge him not to give occasion, by dying intestate, for litigation among his relations." Finding that Johnson was gone to pass the day with the Rev. Mr. Strahan, at Islington, he followed him thither. "Upon my sitting down," relates Hawkins, "he said, that the prospect of the change he was about to undergo, and the thought of meeting his SAVIOUR, troubled him, but that he had hope that He would not reject him. I then began to discourse with him about his will, and the provision for [his servant] Frank, till he grew angry. He told me, that he had signed and sealed the paper I left him. 'But that,' said I, 'had blanks in it, which, as it seems, you have not filled up with the names of the executors.' 'You should have filled them up yourself,' answered he. I replied, that such an act would have looked as if I meant to prevent the choice of a fitter person. 'Sir,' said he, 'these minor virtues are not to be exercised in matters of such importance as this.' At length he said, that on his return home he would send for a clerk, and dictate a will to him. 'You will then,' said I, 'be *inops consilii*; rather do it now.' . . . To this he assented; but such a paroxysm of the asthma seized him, as prevented our

¹ The above account of Miss Burney's last interview with Johnson is compiled from two sources ; namely, her Memoirs of her father Dr. Burney, and her Diary and Letters, now in course of publication.

going on. As the fire burned up, he found himself relieved, and grew cheerful. ‘The fit,’ said he, ‘was very sharp; but I am now easy.’

“After I had dictated a few lines, I told him that the ancient form of wills contained a profession of the faith of the testator; and that he being a man of eminence for learning and parts, it would afford an illustrious example, and well become him, to make such an explicit declaration of his belief, as might obviate all suspicions that he was any other than a Christian. He thanked me for the hint, and calling for paper, wrote on a slip that I had in my hand and gave him, the following words: ‘I humbly commit to the infinite and eternal goodness of ALMIGHTY GOD my soul, polluted with many sins; but, as I hope, purified by repentance, and redeemed, as I trust, by the death of JESUS CHRIST;’ and returning it to me, said, ‘This I commit to your custody.’

“Upon my calling upon him for directions to proceed, he told me that his father, in the course of his trade as a bookseller, had become bankrupt, and that Mr. William Innys had assisted him with money or credit to continue his business. ‘This,’ said he, ‘I consider as an obligation on me to be grateful to his descendants; and I therefore mean to give 200*l.* to his representative.’ He then meditated a devise of his house at Lichfield to the corporation of that city for a charitable use; but, it being freehold, he said, ‘I cannot live a twelve-month, and the last statute of mortmain stands in the way: I must therefore think of some other disposition of it. His next consideration was a provision for Frank, concerning the amount whereof I found he had been consulting Dr. Brocklesby, to whom he had put this question: ‘What would be a proper annuity to bequeath to a favourite servant.’ The doctor answered, that the circumstances of the master were the truest measure; and that in the case of a nobleman, 50*l.* a year was deemed an adequate reward for many years faithful service. ‘Then shall I,’ said Johnson, ‘be *nobilissimus*; for I mean to leave Frank 70*l.* a year; and I desire you to tell him so.’ And now, at the making of the will, a devise, equivalent to such a provision, was therein inserted. The residue of his estate and effects, which took in, though he intended it not, the house at Lichfield, he bequeathed to his executors in trust for a religious association.

"Having executed the will with the necessary formalities, he would have come home; but being pressed by Mr. and Mrs. Strahan to stay, he consented; and we all dined together. Towards the evening he grew cheerful; and I having promised to take him in my coach, Mr. Strahan would accompany him home. In the way thither he appeared much at ease, and told stories."

On the following day, Hawkins saw Johnson about noon. "He was dozing," says the former; "but waking, he found himself in a circle of his friends." Upon opening his eyes, he observed that the prospect of his dissolution was very terrible to him; and added, "You see the state in which I am; conflicting with bodily pain and mental distraction. While you are in health and strength, labour to do good, and avoid evil, if ever you hope to escape the distress that now oppresses me." A little while after, he remarked, "I had, very early in life, the seeds of goodness in me; I had a love of virtue, and a reverence for religion; and these, I trust, have brought forth in me fruits meet for repentance; and if I have repented as I ought, I am forgiven. I have, at times, entertained a loathing of sin, and of myself, particularly at the beginning of this year, when I had the prospect of death before me; and this has not abated when my fears of death have been less; and, at these times, I have had such rays of hope shot into my soul, as have almost persuaded me that I am in a state of reconciliation with God."

Later in the day, Johnson complained that sleep had powerful dominion over him, that he waked with great difficulty, and that probably he should go off in one of these paroxysms. He ate a pretty good dinner with seeming appetite; but appearing rather impatient, and being asked unnecessary and frivolous questions, he remarked, that he often thought of Macbeth,—"Question enrages him." After dinner he said little, but dozed at times. Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne came soon after tea, and said prayers in the presence of the invalid, who retired for the night at ten.

Mr. Hoole, the translator of Tasso, records, that on the evening of Nov. 30th, between six and seven, he went to Johnson's house, and found there Mr. Langton and two other visitors. "The Doctor," he relates, "being asleep in the chamber, we went all to tea and coffee, when the Doctor

came in to us rather cheerful, and entering, said, ‘Dear gentlemen, how do you do?’ He drank coffee; and, in the course of conversation, said that he recollects a poem of his, made some years ago, on a young gentleman coming of age. He repeated the whole with great spirit: it consisted of about fifteen or sixteen stanzas of four lines in alternate rhyme. He said he had only repeated it once since he composed it, and that he never gave but one copy. He said several excellent things that evening; and, among the rest, that ‘scruples made many men miserable, but few men good.’ He spoke of the affectation that men had to accuse themselves of petty faults or weaknesses, in order to exalt themselves into notice for any extraordinary talents which they might possess; and instanced Waller, which he said he would record if he lived to revise his life. Waller was accustomed to say, that his memory was so bad he would sometimes forget to repeat his grace at table, or the LORD’s Prayer, perhaps that people might wonder at what he did else of great moment; for the Doctor observed, that no man takes upon himself small blemishes without supposing that great abilities are attributed to him; and that, in short, this affectation of candour, or modesty, was but another kind of indirect self-praise, and had its foundation in vanity. Frank bringing him a note, as he opened it he said an odd thought struck him, that ‘one should receive no letters in the grave.’ His talk was in general very serious and devout, though occasionally cheerful: he said, ‘You are all serious men, and I will tell you something. About two years since, I feared that I had neglected God, and that then I had not a *mind* to give Him; on which I set about to read Thomas à Kempis in low Dutch, which I accomplished; and thence I judged that my mind was not impaired, low Dutch having no affinity with any of the languages which I knew.’ With respect to his recovery, he seemed to think it hopeless. There was to be a consultation of physicians¹ next day. He wished to have his legs scarified

¹ “Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Warren, and Dr. Butler, physicians, generously attended him without accepting any fees, as did Mr. Cruikshank, surgeon; and all that could be done from professional skill and ability was tried, to prolong a life so truly valuable. He himself, indeed, having, on account of his very bad constitution, been perpetually applying himself to medical inquiries, united his own efforts with those of the gentlemen who attended him.” BOSWELL.

to let out the water ; but this his medical friends opposed, and he submitted to their opinion, though he said he was not satisfied. At half-past eight, he dismissed us all but Mr. Langton. I first asked him if my son should attend him next day to read the Litany, as he had desired ; but he declined it, on account of the expected consultation. We went away, leaving Mr. Langton and Mr. Desmoulins—a young man who was employed in copying his Latin epigrams."

We will close this chapter with the poem alluded to in the foregoing extract. It was composed by Dr. Johnson in 1780, and has been styled a piece of exquisite satire, conveyed in a strain of pointed vivacity and humour ; and in a manner of which no other instance is to be found in Johnson's writings.

Long-expected one-and-twenty,
Lingering year, at length is flown ;
Pride and pleasure, pomp and plenty,
Great [Sir John], are now your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather,
Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

Call the Betsys, Kates, and Jennies,
All the names that banish care ;
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,
Shew the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly,
Joy to see their quarry fly ;
There the gamester, light and jolly,
There the lender, grave and sly.

Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will :
Call the jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full, and spirits high,
What are acres ? what are houses ?
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

Should the guardian, friend, or mother,
Tell the woes of wilful waste,
Scorn their counsels, scorn their pother,
You can hang or drown at last.

We hope our younger readers will ponder well this admirable illustration of the good old proverb—" *Wilful waste brings woful want.*"



CHAPTER XVII.

Johnson destroys his papers. His letter to Mr. Green. He receives the Holy Communion. His prayer. His remark to Dr. Brocklesby. The Parliamentary Debates. Johnson's farewell to Mr. Nichols. He dictates his last will to Mr. Strahan. Johnson's male nurse. Dr. Warren and his permission. Dr. Brocklesby's opinion. Johnson becomes perfectly resigned. Dr. Burney's interview with Johnson. Johnson keeps his bed. Refuses to take nourishment. Mr. Windham. Cawston. Miss Morris. Johnson's death. His funeral. His epitaph. His monument in St. Paul's. Statue erected to him at Lichfield.

OUR narrative now arrives at the 1st of December, 1784,—of the month which was to witness the extinction of one of the brightest luminaries which ever irradiated the literary horizon. On that day Johnson was busied in destroying papers.¹ “As they were,” remarks Boswell, “in great confusion, it is much to be lamented that he had not instructed some faithful and discreet person with the care and selection of them; instead of which he, in a precipitate manner, burnt large masses of them with little regard, as I apprehend, to discrimination. Not that I suppose we have thus been deprived of any compositions which he had ever intended for the public eye; but from what escaped the flames, I judge that many curious circumstances, relating both to himself and other literary characters, have perished.”²

¹ “He burned,” says Mrs. Piozzi, “many letters in the last week, I am told; and those written by his mother drew from him a flood of tears, when the paper they were written on was all consumed. Mr. Sastres saw him cast a melancholy look upon their ashes, which he took up and examined, to see if a word was still legible.”

² “Two very valuable articles,” adds Boswell, “I am sure we have lost, which were, two quarto volumes, containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection. I owned to him, that having accidentally seen them, I had read a great deal in them; and apologising for the liberty I had taken, asked him if I could help it. He placidly answered, ‘Why, sir, I do not think you could have helped it.’”

It has been observed that Johnson's affection for his deceased relatives seemed to grow warmer as he approached nearer to the time when he might hope to see them again. At all events, the following letter, which he wrote on the 2d of December to Mr. Green of Lichfield, shews his anxiety not to leave the world without having paid a tribute of respect to their memory :

"DEAR SIR,—I have enclosed the epitaphs for my father, mother, and brother, to be all engraven on the large size, and laid in the middle aisle of St. Michael's church, which I request the clergyman and churchwardens to permit.

"The first care must be to find the exact place of interment, that the stone may protect the bodies. Then let the stone be deep, massy, and hard; and do not let the difference of ten pounds, or more, defeat our purpose.

"I have enclosed ten pounds, and Mrs. Porter will pay you ten more, which I gave her for the same purpose. What more is wanted shall be sent; and I beg that all possible haste may be made,—for I wish to have it done while I am yet alive. Let me know, dear sir, that you receive this. I am, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Hawkins visited Johnson on the 3d of December, and relates that the Doctor, finding his legs continue to swell, signified to his physicians a strong desire to have them scarified; but they, unwilling to put him to pain, and fearing a mortification, declined advising it. He afterwards consulted his surgeon, and he performed the operation on one leg. In the evening of the same day, Mr. Hoole and another friend went together into the chamber of the illustrious sufferer. He was extremely low, and said, "I am very bad, dear gentlemen, very bad, very low, very cold, and I think I find my life to fail." On the 4th his spirits a little revived. He told Sir John Hawkins that he was easier in his mind, and as fit to die at that instant as he could be a year hence, and re-

I said that I had, for once in my life, felt half an inclination to commit theft. It had come into my mind to carry off those two volumes, and never see him more. Upon my inquiring how this would have affected him, 'Sir,' said he, 'I believe I should have gone mad.'

quested him to receive the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper with him on Sunday, the next day. Accordingly, on the following morning, the Holy Communion was administered to Johnson, Hawkins, and other of the Doctor's friends (including his black servant Frank), "as many as nearly filled the room." Mr. Strahan solemnised the office. Previous to the reading of the exhortation, Johnson knelt, and with great fervour uttered the following prayer :

" Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of Thy Son JESUS CHRIST, our SAVIOUR and REDEEMER. Grant, O LORD, that my whole hope and confidence may be in His merits and Thy mercy ; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance ; make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity ; and make the death of Thy Son JESUS CHRIST effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offences. Bless my friends ; have mercy upon all men. Support me by Thy HOLY SPIRIT in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death ; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Amen."

The Doctor repeatedly desired Mr. Strahan to speak louder, seeming very anxious not to lose any part of the service ; in which, it is related, he joined with very great fervour of devotion. Upon rising from his knees at its conclusion, he said that he dreaded to meet GOD in a state of idiocy, or with opium in his head ; and that, having now communicated with the effects of a dose upon him, he doubted if his exertions were the genuine operations of his mind, and repeated the sentiment of Bishop Taylor, "that little that has been omitted in health can be done to any purpose in sickness." He seemed quite exhausted ; but after lying in his chair for some time in "a kind of doze," he got up and retired into his chamber. To a friend who called on him shortly afterwards he observed, "I have taken my *viaticum* : I hope I shall arrive safe at the end of my journey, and be accepted at last." He spoke very despondingly several times. The suggestion being made to him, that "we have great hopes given us," he replied, "Yes, we have hopes given us ; but they are conditional, and I know not how far I have fulfilled

those conditions." He afterwards said, "However, I think that I have now corrected all bad and vicious habits." "He ate a tolerable dinner," records Mr. Hoole, "but retired directly after. . . . He had looked out a sermon of Dr. Clarke's, 'On the Shortness of Life,' for me to read to him after dinner; but he was too ill to hear it. After six o'clock he called us all into his room, when he dismissed us for that night with a prayer, delivered as he sat in his great chair, in the most fervent and affecting manner, his mind appearing wholly employed with the thoughts of another life. . . . He said before us all, that when he recovered the last spring, he had only called it a *reprieve*; but that he did think it was for a longer time: however, he hoped that the time that had been prolonged to him might be the means of bringing forth fruit meet for repentance."

Sir John Hawkins went to Johnson on the 7th. Before his departure, Dr. Brocklesby came in; and on his taking his patient by the wrist, Johnson gave him a look of great contempt, and ridiculed the judging of his disorder by the pulse. He asked if a puncture would not relieve him, as it had done the year before. Brocklesby answered that it might, but that his surgeon was the best judge of the effect of such an operation. Johnson replied: "How many men in a year die through the timidity of those whom they consult for health! I want length of life; and you fear giving me pain, which I care not for."¹ On the morning of the day on which this affecting conversation occurred, Mr. John Nichols, the printer, called by appointment on the sufferer, who had borrowed from him some of the early volumes of the Gentleman's Magazine, with a professed intention to point out the pieces which he had written in that miscellany. When Nichols entered his chamber, the books lay on the table, with many leaves doubled down, particularly those which contained the Doctor's share in the Parliamentary Debates; and such was Johnson's goodness of heart, that he solemnly declared, that "the only part of his writings which then gave him any compunction, was his account of the De-

¹ Probably at this time Johnson made the observation ascribed to him by Mr. John Nichols, namely: "I would give one of these legs for a year more of life,—I mean, of comfortable life, not such as that which I now suffer."

bates in the Magazine ; but that at the time he wrote them, he did not think he was imposing on the world.”¹ “The mode,” he said, “was to fix upon a speaker’s name, then to conjure up an answer. He wrote those debates with more velocity than any other of his productions—often three columns of the Magazine within the hour. He once wrote ten pages in one day.” Subsequently he added : “I may possibly live, or rather breathe, three days, or perhaps three weeks ; but I find myself daily and gradually worse.” Before Mr. Nichols quitted him, he inquired whether “any of the family of Faden, the printer, were alive.” Being told that “the geographer near Charing Cross was Faden’s son,” he said, after a short pause, “I borrowed a guinea of his father, near thirty years ago ; be so good as to take this and pay it for me.”

“During the whole time of my intimacy with him,” relates Mr. Nichols, “he rarely permitted me to depart without some sententious advice. At the latest of these affecting interviews, his words at parting were : ‘Take care of your eternal salvation. Remember to observe the Sabbath ; let it never be a day of business, nor wholly a day of dissipation.’ He concluded his solemn farewell with, ‘Let my words have their due weight : they are the words of a dying man.’ I never saw him more. In the last five or six days of his life, but few, even of his most intimate friends, were admitted. Every hour that could be abstracted from his bodily pains and infirmities, was spent in prayer and the warmest ejaculations ; and in that pious, praiseworthy, and exemplary manner, he closed a life begun, continued, and ended in virtue.”

On the 8th of December, Hawkins visited Johnson with Mr. Langton, and found him dictating to Mr. Strahan another will, the former being, as he had said at the time of making it, a temporary one. When they entered the room, he said, “God bless you both.” Sir John arrived just in time to direct the execution, and also the attestation, of the above-named document. After Johnson had published it, he desired Mr. Strahan to say the LORD’s prayer. All present audibly joined in the petition ; and at its close the suf-

¹ See ante, p. 21.

ferer uttered a few pious ejaculations. We learn from Mr. Hoole's memoranda, that he and two other members of his family were with Johnson during a part of this day, and that Mr. Nichols also had an interview with him. It was on this occasion that the dying philosopher addressed to the worthy typographer the "words at parting" before mentioned. Mr. Hoole's son, a clergyman, said the Litany, in which the Doctor's responses were deep and sonorous. Johnson more than once interrupted the officiating priest, with "Louder, my dear sir, louder, I entreat you, or you pray in vain!" For this behaviour the Doctor afterwards touchingly apologised. "When I called upon him," says Mr. Hoole jun., "the morning after he had pressed me rather roughly to read *louder*, he said, 'I was peevish yesterday; you must forgive me; when you are as old and sick as I am, perhaps you may be peevish too.' I have heard him make many apologies of this kind." After prayers, Johnson warned all present to profit by his situation; and exhorted Mr. Hoole, who stood next him, to lead a better life than *he* had done. "A better life than you, my dear sir!" was that gentleman's exclamation. The Doctor replied, warmly, "Don't compliment now."

Sir John Hawkins saw Johnson in the evening of the following day, and found him dictating to Mr. Strahan a codicil to the will he had made the day before. "I assisted them in it," says Sir John, "and received from the testator a direction to insert a devise to his executors of the house at Lichfield, to be sold for the benefit of certain of his relations; a bequest of sundry pecuniary and specific legacies; a provision for the annuity of 70*l.* for Francis; and, after all, a devise of all the rest, residue, and remainder of his estate and effects, to his executors, in trust for the said Francis Barber, his executors and administrators; and having dictated accordingly, Johnson executed and published it as a codicil to his will. He was now so weak as to be unable to kneel, and lamented that he must pray sitting; but, with an effort, he placed himself on his knees while Mr. Strahan repeated the LORD's prayer. During the whole of the evening he was much composed and resigned. It was thought necessary that a man should watch with him all night; and one was found in the neighbourhood who, for half-a-crown a night, undertook to sit up with and assist him. When the

man had left the room, he asked Sir John Hawkins where he meant to bury him. Hawkins answered, "Doubtless, in Westminster Abbey." "If," said Johnson, "my executors think it proper to mark the spot of my interment by a stone, let it be so placed as to protect my body from injury."

When Hawkins again visited the Doctor, on the noon of the 10th of December, the latter affirmed that the male nurse to whose care he had been confided was unfit for the office; and added, with something of his old characteristic manner: "He is an idiot; as awkward as a turnspit just put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse." The same day, according to Madame D'Arblay, Johnson was informed by Dr. Warren that he might take what opium he pleased for the alleviation of his pains. The sick man instantly understood the sad meaning of this permission, impressively thanked Dr. Warren, and then gravely took a last leave of him; after which, with the utmost kindness, as well as composure, he formally bid adieu to all his physicians. "Johnson," relates Boswell, "with that native fortitude which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover.¹ 'Give me,' said he, 'a direct answer.' The doctor, having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. 'Then,' said Johnson, 'I will take no more physic—not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I might render up my soul to God unclouded.'

From the time that he was certain his decease was near, Johnson appeared to be perfectly resigned. He no longer looked forward with dismay to his rapidly approaching end.²

¹ Boswell does not name the time at which the above inquiry was made, but we may infer from the statements of the other narrators of the circumstances attendant on Johnson's last hours, that it took place on the day on which Dr. Warren declared his conviction of the hopeless condition of the sufferer.

² "For some time before his death," says Dr. Brocklesby, "all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and propitiation of JESUS CHRIST. "Mr. Pepys," says Hannah More, "wrote me a very kind letter on the death of Johnson, thinking I should be impatient to hear something relating to his last hours. Dr. Brocklesby, his physician, was with him: he said to him a little before

He was seldom or ever fretful or out of temper; and often said to his servant Frank, "Attend, Francis, to the salvation of your soul, which is the object of greatest importance." He also explained to him passages in the Scriptures, and seemed to have pleasure in conversing on religious subjects.

Dr. Burney, having been informed of Johnson's alarming situation, "on Saturday, the 11th December, to his unspeakable comfort," says Madame D'Arblay, "arrived at Bolt Court, just as the poor invalid was able to be visible; and he was immediately admitted." He found the sufferer seated on a great chair, propped up by pillows, and perfectly tranquil. Johnson affectionately took Dr. Burney's hand, and kindly inquired after his health, and that of his family. Burney stayed about half an hour with him, which was partly spent in quiet discourse, partly in calm silence. When he was retiring, Johnson again took his hand, and encouraged him to call yet another time; and afterwards, when again he was departing, the invalid impressively said, though in a low voice, "Tell Fanny to pray for me." And then, still holding, or rather grasping his hand, he made a prayer for himself, which Dr. Burney subsequently described as "the most pious, humble, eloquent, and touching, that mortal man could compose and utter." He concluded it with an Amen, which was spontaneously echoed by all who were present. This over, he brightened up, as if with revived spirits, and "opened cheerfully" into some general conversation; and when Dr. Burney, yet a third time, was taking his reluctant leave, something of his old arch look played upon Johnson's countenance, as smilingly he said: "Tell Fanny I think I shall yet throw the ball at her again."

On Sunday, December the 12th, Dr. Johnson was too ill to leave his bed, and he refused to take any more medicine or food. Mr. Cruikshanks came about eleven, and endeav-

he died, 'Doctor, you are a worthy man, and my friend; but I am afraid you are not a Christian! What can I do better for you than offer up, in your presence, a prayer to the great God, that you may become a Christian in my sense of the word?' Instantly he fell on his knees, and put up a fervent prayer: when he got up, he caught hold of his hand with great eagerness, and cried, 'Doctor! you do not say Amen!' The Doctor looked foolish; but after a pause cried Amen! Johnson said, 'My dear Doctor, believe a dying man, *there is no salvation but in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God*; go home, write down my prayer, and every word I have said, and bring it me to-morrow.' Brocklesby did so."

voured to persuade him to take some nourishment, but in vain. Mr. Windham, who, a little before, had made a similar attempt, went again to him; and, by the advice of Mr. Cruikshanks, suggested that, by persisting to refuse all sustenance, he might probably defeat his own purpose—*to preserve his mind clear*—as his weakness might bring on paralytic complaints that might affect his mental powers. Before Mr. Windham had quite stated his meaning, Johnson interrupted him by saying, that he had refused no sustenance but such as was inebriating; and proceeded to give instances where, in compliance with the wishes of his physician, he had taken even a small quantity of wine. “I readily assented,” says Mr. Windham, “to any objections he might have to nourishment of that kind; and observing that milk was the only nourishment I intended, flattered myself that I had succeeded in my endeavours, when he recurred to his general refusal, and ‘begged that there might be an end of it.’ I then said, I hoped he would forgive my earnestness, or something to that effect; when he replied eagerly, that from me nothing could be necessary by way of apology; adding, with great fervour, in words which I shall, I hope, never forget, ‘God bless you, my dear Windham, through JESUS CHRIST;’ and concluding with a wish ‘that we might share in some humble portion of that happiness which God might finally vouchsafe to repentant sinners.’ These were the last words I ever heard him speak. I hurried out of the room with tears in my eyes, and more affected than I had been on any former occasion.”

Cawston, Mr. Windham’s servant, sat up with Johnson from nine o’clock on Sunday evening till ten o’clock of the morning of the next day. At the interval of each hour, he was assisted to sit up in his bed, and move his legs, which were in much pain. At these periods he regularly addressed himself to fervent prayer. The only sustenance he received was cider and water. He said his mind was prepared, and the time to his dissolution seemed long. At six A.M. he inquired the hour; and on being informed, observed, that all went on regularly, and he felt he had but a few hours to live. At ten A.M. he parted from Cawston, saying,—“I thank you; bear my remembrance to your master.” Not long afterwards, a Miss Morris (sister to an

actress of the same name) called, and told Francis that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Frank went into Johnson's room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said, "GOD bless you, my dear!" These were nearly his last words. Mr. Hoole went up to the sufferer upon Miss Morris's withdrawal, "and found him," he relates, "lying very composed in a kind of doze; he spoke to nobody. Sir John Hawkins, Mr. Langton, Mrs. Gardiner,¹ Rev. Mr. Strahan and Mrs. Strahan, Doctors Brocklesby and Butter, Mr. Steevens, and Mr. Nichols the printer, came; but no one chose to disturb him by speaking to him, and he seemed to take no notice of any person. While Mrs. Gardiner and I were there, before the rest came, he took a little warm milk in a cup, when he said something upon its not being properly given into his hand: he breathed very regularly, though short, and appeared to be mostly in a calm sleep or dozing. I left him in this state, and never more saw him alive."

Johnson remained in the condition above described until his decease, which solemn event took place not long after Mr. Windham's departure. In his last moments he exclaimed "*Jam moriturus!*" and at a quarter past seven in the evening of December 13th, without a groan, or the least sign of pain or uneasiness, put off mortality.

On the Monday after Johnson's dissolution, he was interred in Westminster Abbey. The corpse was brought from his house, in Bolt Court, to the hearse, preceded by the Rev. Mr. Butt and the Rev. Mr. Strahan, about twelve o'clock.

The following was the order of the procession:

Hearse and six.

The executors, viz. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and William Scott, LL.D., afterwards Lord Stowell, in a coach and four.

Eight coaches and four, containing the Literary Club, and others of the Doctor's friends, invited by the executors, viz. Dr. Burney, Mr. Malone, Mr. Steevens, the Rev.

¹ The wife of a tallow-chandler on Snow Hill, and one of his early friends.

Mr. Strahan, Mr. Ryland, Mr. Hoole, Dr. Brocklesby, Mr. Cruikshanks, Mr. Nichols, Mr. Low, Mr. Paradise, General Paoli, Count Zenobia, Dr. Butter, Mr. Holder, Mr. Seward, Mr. Metcalf, Mr. Sastres, Mr. Desmoulins, the Rev. Mr. Butt, Dr. Horsley, Dr. Farner, Dr. Wright, Mr. Cooke, and the Doctor's faithful servant, Francis Barber.

Two coaches and four, containing the pall-bearers, viz. Mr. Burke,¹ Mr. Windham, Sir Charles Bunbury, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Colman, and Mr. Langton.

After these followed two mourning-coaches and four, filled with gentlemen, who, as volunteers, honoured themselves by attending the funeral: these were the Rev. Mr. Hoole, the Rev. Mr. East, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Mickle, Mr. Sharp, Mr. C. Burney, and Mr. G. Nichol.

Thirteen gentlemen's carriages closed the procession, which reached the Abbey a little before one.

The corpse was met at the west door by the prebendaries in residence, to the number of six, in their surplices and doctors' hoods; and the officers of the church, and attendants on the funeral, were then marshalled in the following order:

Two vergers.
The Rev. Mr. Strahan.
The Rev. Mr. Butt.
The Body.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, as chief mourner and executor.

Sir John Hawkins and Dr. Scott, as executors.

The rest, two and two.

The body then proceeded to the south transept, and, in view of the three executors, was deposited near the foot of Shakespeare's monument, and close to the coffin of Garrick.

¹ Boswell says that Mr. Langton "one day [during the Doctor's illness] found Mr. Burke, and four or five more friends, sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, 'I am afraid, sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you.' 'No, sir,' said Johnson; 'it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when your company would not be a delight to me.' Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, 'My dear sir, you have always been too good to me.' Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men."

"The Rev. Dr. Taylor," says Mr. Steevens, "performed the burial - service, attended by some gentlemen of the Abbey; but it must be regretted by all who continue to reverence the hierarchy, that the cathedral-service was withheld from its invariable friend; and the omission was truly offensive to the audience at large." All Johnson's friends appear to have participated in the feelings of the writer of the above paragraph.

Over Johnson's grave was placed a large blue flag-stone, with this inscription:

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.
Obiit XIII. die Decembris,
Anno Domini
MDCCCLXXXIV.
Ætatis sue LXXV.

A monument, consisting of a colossal figure leaning against a column, was, subsequently, at the cost of eleven hundred guineas, erected to the memory of the philosopher in St. Paul's Cathedral. The task of composing the epitaph was assigned, by the "public wish and voice," to Dr. Parr; who, however, on its first proposal, shrank with awe from the undertaking. In a letter to a friend he thus expresses himself respecting it: "I must leave this mighty task to some hardier and some abler hand. The variety and the splendour of Johnson's attainments, the peculiarity of his character, his private virtues, and his literary publications, fill me with confusion and dismay, when I reflect on the confined and difficult species of composition in which alone they can be expressed on his monument."

The house in which Johnson was born is still shewn in the marketplace of Lichfield, and is continually visited by strangers who revere his memory. In the year 1838, a statue was erected in the space opposite the house, at the sole expense of the Rev. J. T. Law, chancellor of the diocese and then master of St. John's Hospital in Lichfield. The statue is the work of Lucas, and represents Johnson in a sitting posture, with his head resting on his arm. The pedestal is ornamented with bas-reliefs representing several incidents of his life—his being borne on the shoulders of his school-fellows, his listening to the preaching of Sacheverell, and doing penance in the

marketplace at Uttoxeter. The principal figure presents, to those who have contemplated the life of Johnson in all its lights and shades, no unfaithful memorial of the great original.



CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

SAYINGS AND DOINGS OF DR. JOHNSON.

Learned ladies. Scotch gooseberries. Scotland. Whining wives. Toryism and Garrick. The French Academy. Strong facts. The national debt. Johnson's candour. Low company. Johnson and the country magistrate. Free and fat. Johnson's readiness to apologise. His generous humanity. His judicious charity. His treatment of the poor. His propensity to paltry saving. Merriment of parsons. Ossian's poems. Infidels. Johnson's "estate in Yorkshire." Ignorance. King David. *Pilgrim's Progress*. Parodies on Percy's ballads. Volubility. Mrs. Macaulay. A rude speech. A lie to the eye. Funeral urns. "Too many irons in the fire." Comical answer to Goldsmith. Story-telling. "Introductions" and "conclusions." The Holy Eucharist. Johnson's recitation of poetry. Veracity. "Fiddle-de-dee." Romantic virtue. Want of cash. A "lazy dog." A scoundrel. A tradesman's daughter and her inferiors. Methodist preachers. Respect due to a D.D. Gallantry of the old English nobility. A dull fellow. "Triumph of hope over experience." Foppery. Mr. Montague's party. Climbing. Rapid reading. Indiscriminate charity. Mr. Walmesley's epitaph. Riot in Marylebone Gardens. Johnson's attention to fashion. Johnson's "good things." Schoolmasters. Johnson's Lent fast. Palmyra. "I can wait." Awkwardness in counting money. Berkeley's theory. Johnson's dislikes. A "stately shop." Difference between a well and ill-bred man. A fraudulent wife. A charade. Johnson's criticisms on his own writings. Garrick. Johnson's "frisk" with Beauclerk and Langton. Desire of distinction. Corneille and Shakespeare. Emigration of the Scotch to London. "Vacuity." "Ocean." Johnson's aversion to being worsted in argument. Dr. Goldsmith. Dignity of literature. Johnson's feat on the stage. A pun. Clubs. Dr. Barnard.

WE propose in the following chapter to give a selection of anecdotes illustrative of the "sayings and doings of Dr. Johnson,"—anecdotes which could not have been inserted in the foregoing biography without breaking the thread of the narrative; but which are at the same time too interesting in themselves, and too characteristic of the illustrious person whom they concern, to be passed over in silence.

Several ladies being in company with Johnson, it was remarked by one of them, that a learned woman was by no means a rare character in the present age; when the Doctor replied, "I have known a great many ladies who knew Latin, but very few who knew English." A lady observed, that women surpassed men in epistolary correspondence. Johnson said, "I do not know that." "At least," said the lady, "they are most pleasing when they are in conversation." "No, madam," answered Johnson, "I think they are most pleasing *when they hold their tongues.*"

On Johnson's return from the Hebrides, a particular friend of his was saying, that now he had had a view of Scotland, he was in hopes it would cure him of many prejudices against that country, particularly in respect to the fruits. "Why, yes, sir," said the Doctor; "I have found out that gooseberries will grow there against a south wall; but the skins are so tough that it is death to the man who swallows one of them." About the same period, he was asked by a native of Scotland what he thought of his country. "That it is a very vile country, to be sure, sir," returned Johnson. "Well, sir," replied the other, somewhat mortified, "God made it." "Certainly He did," answered Johnson; "but we must always remember that He made it for Scotchmen."

"I pitied," says Mrs. Piozzi, "a friend before him, who had a whining wife that found every thing painful to her, and nothing pleasing." "He does not know that she whimpers," he remarked. "When a door has creaked for a fortnight together, you may observe, the master will scarcely give sixpence to get it oiled." Garrick one day, says the same lady, asked him, "Why did you not make me a tory, when we lived so much together; you love to make people tories?" "Why," answered Johnson, pulling some halfpence from his pocket, "did not the king make these guineas?"

When, upon the publication of his Dictionary, a person complimented him upon it, and alluded to the ill success of the French in a similar attempt, he replied, "Why, what could you expect, dear sir, from fellows that eat frogs?"

To a friend who was praising the style of Swift, and insisting that there were *strong facts* in the account of the *Four last Years of Queen Anne*, Johnson remarked, "Yes, surely, sir; and so there are in the Ordinary of Newgate's Calendar."

When Johnson felt "his fancy disordered," his constant recurrence was to the study of arithmetic; and "one day," records Mrs. Piozzi, "that he was totally confined to his chamber, and I inquired what he had been doing to divert himself, he shewed me a calculation which I could scarce be made to understand, so vast was the plan of it, and so very intricate were the figures; no other indeed than that the national debt, computing it at one hundred and eighty millions sterling, would, if converted into silver, serve to make a meridian of that metal, I forget how broad, for the globe of the whole earth, the real *globe*."

A friend was one day, about two years before Johnson's death, struck with some instance of his great candour. "Well, sir," said he, "I will always say that you are a very candid man." "Will you?" replied the Doctor; "I doubt then you will be very singular. But indeed, sir, I look upon myself to be a man very much misunderstood. I am not an uncandid, nor am I a severe man. I sometimes say more than I mean, in jest; and people are apt to believe me serious. However, I am more candid than I was when I was younger. As I know more of mankind, I expect less of them, and am now ready to call a man *a good man* upon easier terms than I was formerly."

Speaking of a gentleman whose house was much frequented by low company, he said: "Rags will always make their appearance where they have a right to do it."

A dull country magistrate gave Johnson a long tedious account of his exercising criminal jurisdiction, the result of which was his having sentenced four convicts to transportation. The Doctor, in an agony of impatience to get rid of such a companion, exclaimed, "I heartily wish, sir, that I were a fifth!"

He was present at the reading of a tragedy, in which there occurred this line,

"Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free;"

and the company having greatly admired it, "I cannot agree with you," he observed; "it might as well be said

"Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat."

No man was more ready to make an apology when he had censured unjustly than Johnson. When a proof-sheet of one

of his works was brought to him, he found fault with the mode in which a part of it was arranged, refused to read it, and in a passion desired that the compositor might be sent to him. The compositor, who was a "decent sensible man," by producing the ms. at once satisfied the Doctor that he was not to blame. Upon which Johnson earnestly and candidly said to him, "Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon; Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again."

His generous humanity to the miserable was almost beyond example. The following instance is well attested: coming home late one night, he found a poor woman lying in the street, so much exhausted that she could not walk. He took her upon his back and carried her to his house, where he discovered that she was a person who had fallen into the lowest state of vice, poverty, and disease. Instead of harshly upbraiding her, he had her taken care of with all tenderness for a long time, at a considerable expense, till she was restored to health, and endeavoured to put her into a virtuous way of living.

Johnson's charity to the poor was uniform and extensive, both from inclination and principle. He not only bestowed liberally out of his own purse; "but what," says Boswell, "is more difficult as well as rare, would beg from others, when he had proper objects in view. This he did judiciously as well as humanely. Mr. Philip Metcalfe tells me, that when he has asked him for some money for persons in distress, and Mr. Metcalfe has offered what Johnson thought too much, he insisted on taking less, saying, 'No, no, sir; we must not *pamper* them.'" "He loved the poor," remarks Mrs. Piozzi, "as I never yet saw any one else do, with an earnest desire to make them happy. What signifies, says some one, giving halfpence to common beggars? they only lay it out in gin and tobacco. 'And why should they be denied such sweeteners of their existence?' says Johnson: 'it is surely very savage to refuse them every possible avenue to pleasures reckoned too coarse for our own acceptance. Life is a pill which none of us can bear to swallow without gilding; yet for the poor we delight in stripping it yet barer, and are not ashamed to shew even visible displeasure, if ever the bitter taste is taken from their mouths.'"

Notwithstanding the Doctor's remarkable generosity,—

"yet," says Boswell, "there lurked about him a propensity to paltry saving. One day I owned to him, that I was occasionally troubled with a fit of *narrowness*.' 'Why, sir,' said he, 'so am I. *But I do not tell it.*' He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked him for it again, seemed to be rather out of humour. A droll little circumstance once occurred: as if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me: 'Boswell, *lend* me sixpence — *not to be repaid.*' "

Johnson and his friend Beauclerk were once together in company with several clergymen, who thought that they should appear to advantage by assuming the "lax jollity" of *men of the world*; which they carried to noisy excess. Johnson, who, they expected, would be *entertained*, sat grave and silent for some time. At last, turning to Beauclerk, he said, by no means in a whisper, "This merriment of parsons is very offensive."

He thought the poems published as translations from Ossian had so little merit, that he remarked: "Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would *abandon* his mind to it."

The settled aversion Dr. Johnson felt towards an infidel, he expressed to all ranks, and at all times, without the smallest reserve; for though on common occasions he paid great deference to birth and title, yet his regard for truth and virtue never gave way to meaner considerations. "We talked," relates Mrs. Piozzi, "of a dead wit one evening, and somebody praised him. 'Let us never praise talents so ill employed, sir; we foul our mouths by commanding such infidels,' said he. 'Allow him the *lumières*, at least,' entreated one of the company. 'I do allow him, sir,' replied Johnson, 'just enough to light him to hell.' "

A young fellow, very confident in his abilities, lamenting one day that he had lost all his Greek: "I believe it happened at the same time, sir," said Johnson, "that I lost all my large estate in Yorkshire."

"We had been visiting," relates Mrs. Piozzi, "at a lady's house, whom, as we returned, some of the company ridiculed for her ignorance. 'She is not ignorant,' said Johnson, 'I believe, of any thing she has been taught, or of any thing she is desirous to know;—and I suppose if one wanted a

little *run tea*, she might be a proper person enough to apply to.'"

Johnson once in his life was known to have uttered what is called a *bull*. Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were riding together in Devonshire, complained that he had a very bad horse ; for that, even when going down hill, he moved slowly, step by step. "Ay," said the Doctor, "and when he *goes* up hill, he *stands still*."

A gentleman having said that a *congé d'élide* has not, perhaps, the force of a command, but may be considered only as a strong recommendation : "Sir," replied Johnson, who overheard him, "it is such a recommendation as if I should throw you out of a two-pair of stairs window, and recommend you to fall soft."

Miss Johnson, one of Sir Joshua's nieces (afterwards Mrs. Deane), was dining one day at her uncle's with Dr. Johnson and a large party ; the conversation happening to turn on music, Johnson spoke very contemptuously of that art, and added, "that no man of talent, or whose mind was capable of better things, ever would or could devote his time and attention to so idle and frivolous a pursuit." The young lady, who was very fond of music, whispered her next neighbour, "I wonder what Dr. Johnson thinks of King David?" Johnson overheard her, and with great good humour and complacency said, "Madam, I thank you ; I stand rebuked before you, and promise that, on one subject at least, you shall never hear me talk nonsense again."

Johnson one day took Dr. Percy's little daughter on his knee, and asked her what she thought of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The child answered, that she had not read it. "No?" replied Johnson ; "then I would not give one farthing for you ;" and he set her down, and took no further notice of her.

When Dr. Percy first published his collection of ancient English ballads, "perhaps," remarks Steevens, "he was too lavish in commendation of the beautiful simplicity and poetic merit he supposed himself to discover in them." This circumstance provoked Johnson to observe one evening at Miss Reynolds's tea-table, that he could rhyme as well, and as elegantly, in common narrative and conversation. "For instance," he said :

“ As with my hat upon my head
 I walked along the Strand,
 I there did meet another man
 With his hat in his hand.

Or, to render such poetry subservient to my own immediate use :

I therefore pray thee, Renny dear,
 That thou wilt give to me,
 With cream and sugar softened well,
 Another dish of tea.

Nor fear that I, my gentle maid,
 Shall long detain the cup,
 When once unto the bottom I
 Have drunk the liquor up.

Yet hear, alas ! this mournful truth,
 Nor hear it with a frown ;—
 Thou canst not make the tea so fast
 As I can gulp it down.”

And thus he proceeded through several more stanzas, till the reverend critic cried out for quarter.

At another time, at Streatham, Johnson caricatured “some of the old legendary stories put in verse by modern writers,” thus :

“ The tender infant, meek and mild,
 Fell down upon the stone ;
 The nurse took up the squealing child,
 But still the child squeal’d on.”

Of a member of parliament, who, after having harangued for some hours in the House of Commons, came into a company where Johnson was, and endeavoured to talk him down, he said, “ This man has a pulse in his tongue.”

Being asked whether he had read Mrs. Macaulay’s second volume of the *History of England*, “ No, sir,” said he, “ nor her first neither.”

One of his rudest speeches was to a pompous gentleman coming out of Lichfield cathedral, who said, “ Dr. Johnson,

we have had a most excellent discourse to-day." "That may be," said Johnson; "but it is impossible that you should know it."

"Walking one day with him," says Mr. Wickens, a draper of Lichfield, whom Johnson sometimes called upon during his visits to that city, "in my garden, we entered a small meandering shrubbery, whose 'vista not lengthened to the sight,' gave promise of a larger extent. I observed, that he might perhaps conceive that he was entering an extensive labyrinth, but that it would prove a deception, though I hoped not an unpardonable one. 'Sir,' said he, 'don't tell me of deception; a lie, sir, is a lie, whether it be a lie to the eye or a lie to the ear.' Passing on, we came to an urn which I had erected to the memory of a deceased friend. I asked how he liked that urn—it was of the true Tuscan order. 'Sir,' said he, 'I hate urns; they *are* nothing, they *mean* nothing, convey no ideas but horror;—would they were beaten to pieces to pave our streets!'"

A Mrs. Brooke having repeatedly desired Johnson to look over her new play of the *Siege of Sinope* before it was acted, he always found means to evade it; at last she pressed him so closely that he actually refused to do it, and told her that she herself, by carefully looking it over, would be able to see if there was any thing amiss as well as he could. "But, sir," said she, "I have no time; I have already so many irons in the fire." "Why, then, madam," said he, quite out of patience, "the best thing I can advise you to do is, to put your tragedy along with your irons."

He once made Goldsmith a comical answer in reference to the success of Beattie's *Essay on Truth*: "Here's such a stir," said Goldsmith, "about a fellow that has written one book, and I have written many." "Ah, Doctor," replied Johnson, "there go two-and-forty sixpences, you know, to one guinea."

Having had a general invitation from Lord Lansdowne to see Bowood, his lordship's seat in Wiltshire, he accordingly made him a visit. He arrived about dinner-time, and was received with such courtesy and respect that he joined in the conversation with much pleasantry and good humour. He told several stories of literary characters, and, in particular, the last part of his celebrated letter to Lord Chesterfield.

Soon afterwards, a friend of Lord Lansdowne's happened to arrive from London; but being too late for dinner, his lordship apologised, and added, "But you have lost a better thing than dinner, in not being here time enough to hear Dr. Johnson repeat his charming letter to Lord Chesterfield, though I daresay the Doctor will be kind enough to give it us again." "Indeed, my lord," said Johnson (who began to growl the moment the subject was mentioned), "I will not: I told the story just for my own amusement, but I will not be dragged in as story-teller to a company."

"I have heard Sir Joshua," says Mrs. Piozzi, "repeat a speech which the Doctor made about the time of his writing the Idler, and in which he gave himself credit in two particulars: 'There are two things,' said he, 'which I am confident I can do very well: one is, an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion, shewing, from various causes, why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public.'"

A gentleman on one occasion having mentioned to Johnson a book lately published on the Holy Eucharist, the sage replied, "Sir, I look upon the Sacrament as the palladium of our religion: I hope that no profane hands will venture to touch it."

Johnson read serious and sublime poetry with great gravity and feeling. In the recital of prayers and religious poems he was awfully impressive, and his memory served him upon these occasions with great readiness. One night, at the club, a person quoting the nineteenth psalm, the Doctor instantly took off his hat, and began with great solemnity,—

"The spacious firmament on high," &c.

and went through that composition. Those who were acquainted with Johnson knew how harsh his features often were; but, upon this occasion, to use the language of Scripture, "his face was almost as if it had been the face of an angel."

A Mr. Crawford wished to pay his court to Dr. Johnson, and having heard that he preferred Donne's Satires to Pope's version of them, said, "Do you know, Dr. Johnson, that I

like Dr. Donne's original Satires better than Pope's." Johnson replied, "Well, sir, I can't help that."

He was intimate with Mr. John Payne, once a bookseller in Paternoster Row, and afterwards chief accountant of the Bank. Mr. Payne was very diminutive; and once when they were on a visit to a friend, Johnson gaily proposed that they should run a race together. The proposal was accepted; but, before they had proceeded more than half the intended distance, Johnson caught his little adversary up in his arms, and, without any ceremony, placed him upon the branch of a tree which was near, and then continued running as if he had met with a hard match. He afterwards returned with much exultation to release his friend from the awkward situation in which he had left him.

His veracity was, from the most trivial to the most solemn occasions, strict even to severity; he scorned to embellish a story with fictitious circumstances, which, he used to say, took off from its real value. "A story," he remarked, "should be a specimen of life and manners; but if the surrounding circumstances are false, as it is no more a representation of reality, it is no longer worthy our attention."

It was near the close of his life that two young ladies who warmly admired his works, but had never seen him, went to Bolt Court, and, asking if he was at home, were shewn up stairs, where he was writing. He laid down his pen on their entrance; and, as they stood before him, one of the females repeated a speech of some length, previously prepared for the occasion. It was an enthusiastic effusion; to which, when the speaker had finished, she anxiously awaited the Doctor's reply. What was their mortification when all he said was, "Fiddle-de-dee, my dear!"

Johnson used to advise his friends to be upon their guard against romantic virtue, as being founded upon no settled principle: "A plank," said he, "that is tilted up at one end, must of course fall down on the other."

Talking of the want of memory, he said, "No, sir, it is not true; in general every person has an equal capacity for reminiscence, and for one thing as well as another; otherwise it would be like a person complaining that he could hold silver in his hand, but could not hold copper."

One day, seeing an old terrier lying asleep by the fire-

side at Streatham, he said, "Presto, you are, if possible, a more lazy dog than I am."

He used to say a man was a scoundrel who was afraid of any thing.

Being solicited by a friend to compose a funeral sermon for the daughter of a tradesman, he naturally inquired into the character of the deceased; and being told that she was remarkable for her humility and condescension to inferiors, he observed, that those were very laudable qualities; but it might not be so easy to discover who the lady's inferiors were.

He observed, that the established clergy in general did not preach plain enough; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people without any impression upon their hearts. Something might be necessary, he said, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy; and therefore he supposed that the new concomitants of Methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. The mind, like the body, delighted in change and novelty; and, even in religion itself, courted new appearances and modifications. Whatever might be thought of some Methodist teachers, he said he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man who travelled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times in a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour.

He refused, relates Dr. Maxwell; to go out of a room before me at Mr. Langton's house, saying, he hoped he knew his rank better than to presume to take place of a doctor in divinity.

Being asked by a young nobleman, what was become of the gallantry and military spirit of the old English nobility? he replied, "Why, my lord, I'll tell you what is become of it: it is gone into the city to look for a fortune."

In allusion to a dull tiresome person whom he chanced to meet, he observed, "That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one."

A gentleman who had been very unhappy in the wedded state, married again immediately after his wife died: Johnson said, it was the triumph of hope over experience.

He said, foppery was never cured; it was the bad stamina

of the mind, which, like those of the body, were never rectified : once a coxcomb, and always a coxcomb.

One evening, at Mrs. Montague's, where a splendid company was assembled, consisting of the most eminent literary characters, he seemed highly pleased with the respect and attention that were shewn him. Being asked, on his return home, if he was not highly *gratified* by his visit. "No, sir," he replied, "not highly *gratified*; yet I do not recollect to have passed many evenings *with fewer objections*."

Johnson was very ambitious to excel in common acquirements as well as in uncommon, and particularly in feats of activity. One day, as he was walking in Gunisbury Park with some gentlemen and ladies, who were admiring the extraordinary size of some of the trees, one of the gentlemen remarked that, when he was a boy, he made nothing of climbing the largest there. "Why, I can swarm it now," exclaimed Johnson, which excited a hearty laugh; on which he ran to the tree, clung round the trunk, ascended to the branches, and would have gone in amongst them, had he not been very earnestly entreated to descend; and down he came with a triumphant air, seeming to make nothing of it. He was then between fifty and sixty.

A large party had one day been invited to meet Johnson at Stow-hill: the dinner waited far beyond the usual hour, and the company were about to sit down, when the Doctor appeared at the great gate; he stood for some time in deep contemplation, and at length began to climb it; and having succeeded in clearing it, advanced with hasty strides towards the house. On his arrival, Mrs. Gastrel asked him, "if he had forgotten that there was a small gate for foot-passengers by the side of the carriage-entrance." "No, my dear lady, by no means," replied Johnson; "but I had a mind to try whether I could climb a gate now as I used to do when I was a lad."

He always read with amazing rapidity, glancing his eye from the top to the bottom of the page in an instant. If he made any pause, it was a compliment to the work; and, after see-sawing over it a few minutes, he generally repeated the passage, especially if it was poetry.

The ladies at Stow-hill would occasionally rebuke him for the indiscriminate exercise of his charity to all who applied

for it. "There was that woman," said one of them, "to whom you yesterday gave half-a-crown; why, she was at church to-day in long sleeves and ribands." "Well, my dear," answered Johnson, "and if it gave the woman pleasure, why should she not wear them?"

He had long promised to write Mr. Walmesley's epitaph, and Mrs. W. waited for it, in order to erect a monument to her husband's memory. Procrastination, however, one of the Doctor's failings, prevented its being finished. He was engaged upon it in his last illness; and when the physicians, at his own request, informed him of his danger, he pushed the papers from before him, saying, "It was too late to write the epitaph of another, when he should so soon want one himself."

Dr. Johnson, it is related, once assumed a character in which, perhaps, even Mr. Boswell never saw him. His curiosity having been excited by the praises bestowed on the celebrated Torré's fireworks at Marybone Gardens, he desired Mr. Steevens to accompany him thither. The evening had proved showery, and soon after the few people present were assembled, public notice was given that the conductors of the wheels, suns, stars, &c. were so thoroughly water-soaked that it was impossible any part of the exhibition should be made. "This is a mere excuse," said the Doctor, "to save their crackers for a more profitable company. Let us both hold up our sticks and threaten to break those coloured lamps that surround the orchestra, and we shall soon have our wishes gratified. The core of the fireworks cannot be injured; let the different pieces be touched in their respective centres, and they will do their offices as well as ever." Some young men who overheard him, immediately began the violence he had recommended; and an attempt was speedily made to fire some of the wheels which appeared to have received the smallest damage; but to little purpose were they lighted, for most of them completely failed. The author of the Rambler, however, may be considered on this occasion as the ringleader of a successful riot, though not as a skilful pyrotechnist.

"It has been supposed," says Steevens, "that Dr. Johnson, so far as fashion was concerned, was careless of his appearance in public. But this is not altogether true; as the

following slight instance may shew. Goldsmith's last comedy was to be represented during some court-mourning, and Mr. Steevens appointed to call on Dr. Johnson and carry him to the tavern where he was to dine with other of the poet's friends. The Doctor was ready dressed, but in coloured clothes; yet being told that he would find every one in black, received the intelligence with a profusion of thanks, hastened to change his attire, all the while repeating his gratitude for the information that had saved him from an appearance so improper in the front row of a front box. 'I would not,' added he, 'for ten pounds, have seemed so retrograde to any general observance.'

"After repeating to him," remarks Boswell, "some of his pointed, lively sayings, I said, 'It is a pity, sir, you don't always remember your own good things, that you may have a laugh when you will.' *Johnson.* 'Nay, sir, it is better that I forget them, that I may be reminded of them, and have a laugh on their being brought to my recollection.'

Speaking of schoolmasters, he used to say they were worse than the Egyptian task-masters of old. "No boy," he observed, "is sure any day he goes to school to escape a whipping. How can the schoolmaster tell what the boy has really forgotten, and what he has neglected to learn; what he has had no opportunities of learning, and what he has taken no pains to get at the knowledge of? Yet, for any of these, however difficult they may be, the boy is obnoxious to punishment."

"Mr. Johnson," says Mrs. Piozzi, "though in general a great feeder, kept fast in Lent, particularly the holy week, with a vigour very dangerous to his general health; but though he had left off wine (from religious motives, as I always believed, though he did not own it), yet he did not hold the commutation of offences by voluntary penance, or encourage others to practise severity upon themselves. He even once said, 'that he thought it an error to endeavour at pleasing God by taking the rod of reproof out of His hands.'

A youth asked him abruptly one day, "Pray, sir, what and where is Palmyra? I heard somebody talk last night of the ruins of Palmyra." "'Tis a hill in Ireland," replied Johnson, "with palms growing on the top, and a bog at the bottom, and so they call it *Palm-mira*." Seeing, however,

that the boy thought him serious, and thanked him for the information, he gently undeceived him; and told him the history, geography, and chronology of Tadmor in the wilderness.

A gentleman who introduced his brother to Johnson was earnest to recommend him to the Doctor's notice, which he did by saying, "When we have sat together some time, you'll find my brother grow very entertaining." "Sir," said Johnson, "I can wait."

Beauclerk having observed to him of one of their friends, that he was awkward at counting money; "Why, sir," said Johnson, "I am likewise awkward at counting money. But then, sir, the reason is plain; I have had very little money to count."

Being in company with a gentleman who maintained Dr. Berkeley's theory that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away, Johnson said to him, "Pray, sir, don't leave us; for we may perhaps forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist."

He would sometimes find his dislikes on very slender circumstances. Mr. Steevens happening one day to mention Mr. Flexman, a dissenting preacher, with some compliment to his exact memory in chronological matters; the Doctor replied, "Let me hear no more of him, sir. That is the fellow who made the index to my Ramblers, and set down the name of Milton thus: Milton, *Mr. John.*"

Johnson was very constant to those whom he once employed, if they gave him no reason to be displeased. When somebody talked of being imposed on in the purchase of tea and sugar, and such articles: "That will not be the case," he observed, "if you go to a *stately shop*, as I always do. In such a shop it is not worth their while to take a petty advantage."

The difference, he remarked, between a well-bred and an ill-bred man is this: "One immediately attracts your liking, the other your aversion. You love the one till you find reason to hate him; you hate the other till you find reason to love him."

A wife of one of his acquaintance had fraudulently made a purse for herself out of her husband's fortune. Feeling a proper compunction in her last moments, she confessed how

much she had secreted ; but before she could tell where it was placed, she was seized with a convulsive fit and expired. Her husband said he was more hurt by her want of confidence in him than by the loss of his money. "I told him," said Johnson, "that he should console himself ; but *perhaps* the money might be *found*, and he was *sure* that his wife was *gone*."

"My readers," remarks Boswell, "will probably be surprised to hear that the great Dr. Johnson could amuse himself with so slight and playful a species of composition as a *charade*. I have recovered one which he made on Dr. Barnard, now Lord Bishop of Killaloe. It is as follows :

"My *first* shuts out thieves from your house or your room,
My *second* expresses a Syrian perfume ;
My *whole* is a man in whose converse is shared
The strength of a Bar and the sweetness of nard."

When in good humour, he would talk of his own writings with wonderful frankness and candour, and would even criticise them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him, how he liked that paper ; he shook his head, and answered, "Too wordy." At another time, when one was reading his tragedy of *Irene* to a company at a house in the country, he left the room ; and somebody having asked him the reason of this, he replied, "Sir, I thought it had been better."

Forgetting an appointment he had made to sup with Garrick, till near one o'clock in the morning, Johnson sallied out at that hour, and knocked at the great actor's door in Southampton Street. Garrick, putting his head out of the window, told him all the company were gone, and that he and Mrs. Garrick were going to bed. "Open the door, David," said the Doctor; "I have something to tell you that will give you satisfaction." This brought down Garrick ; who, after letting him in, impatiently asked him what was the news he had that was to give him so much *satisfaction*. "Why, sit you down there," said Johnson, "*and I'll flatter you*."

One night, when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, they resolved to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his

little black wig on the top of his head instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and, with great good humour, agreed to their proposal. "What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you." He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of *bishop*; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

"Short, very short be then thy reign,
For I'm in haste to laugh and drink again."

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day; but Langton deserted them, being invited to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for "leaving his social friends to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls." Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, "I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the *Chronicle*." Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, "He durst not do such a thing. His wife would not let him!"

All desire of distinction had a sure enemy in Johnson. We met, relates Mrs. Piozzi, a friend driving six very small ponies, and stopped to admire them. "Why does nobody," said the Doctor, "begin the fashion of driving six spavined horses, all spavined of the same leg? It would have a mighty pretty effect, and produce the distinction of doing something worse than the common way."

Somebody one day was praising Corneille in opposition to Shakespeare: "Corneille is to Shakespeare," observed Johnson, "as a clipped hedge is to a forest."

The emigration of the Scotch to London being a conversation between the Doctor and Foote, the latter said he believed the number of Scotch in London was as great in

the former as the present reign : "No, sir," replied Johnson ; "you are certainly wrong in your belief; but I see how you're deceived; you can't distinguish them now as formerly, for the fellows all come here *breeched* of late years."

He had come down one morning to the breakfast-room at Streatham, and been a considerable time by himself before any body appeared. When on a subsequent day he was twitted by Mrs. Thrale for being very late, which he generally was, he defended himself by alluding to the extraordinary morning, when he had been too early ; and said "Madam, I do not like to come down to *vacuity*."

A gentleman once told Johnson, that a friend of his, looking into the Dictionary which the Doctor had lately published, could not find the word *ocean*. "Not find *ocean*!" exclaimed the lexicographer ; "sir, I doubt the veracity of your information!" He instantly stalked into his library ; and opening the work in question with the utmost impatience, at last triumphantly put his finger upon the object of research, adding, "There, sir, there is *ocean*!" The gentleman was preparing to apologise for the mistake ; but Johnson good-naturedly dismissed the subject, with "Never mind it, sir ; perhaps your friend spells *ocean* with an *s*!"

Johnson could not brook appearing to be worsted in argument, even when he had taken the wrong side, to shew the force and dexterity of his talents. When, therefore, he perceived that his opponent gained ground, he had recourse to some sudden mode of robust sophistry. "Once," says Boswell, "when I was pressing upon him with visible advantage, he stopped me thus : 'My dear Boswell, let's have no more of this ; you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather have you whistle a Scotch tune.'" Care, however, must be taken to distinguish between Johnson when he "talked for victory," and Johnson when he had no desire but to inform and illustrate. "One of his principal talents" (to cite the words of his friend, the Right Hon. William G. Hamilton) "was shewn in maintaining the wrong side of an argument, and in a splendid perversion of the truth. If you could contrive to have his fair opinion on a subject, and without any bias from personal prejudice, or from a wish to be victorious in argument, it was wisdom itself, not only convincing, but overpowering." He had, however, all his life habituated himself

to consider conversation as a trial of intellectual vigour and skill ; and to this may be ascribed that unexampled richness and brilliancy which appeared in his own. As a proof at once of his eagerness for colloquial distinction, and high opinion of Mr. Hamilton, he once addressed him thus ; "We now have been several hours together, and you have said but one thing for which I envied you."

Of Dr. Goldsmith, Johnson said : "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."

No one had a higher notion of the dignity of literature than Johnson, or was more determined in maintaining the respect which he justly considered as due to it. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that once when he dined in a numerous company of booksellers, where, the room being small, the head of the table at which he sat was almost close to the fire, he persevered in suffering a great deal of inconvenience from the heat, rather than quit his place and let one of them sit above him.

"The Doctor," remarks Mrs. Piozzi, "was very athletic. Garrick told a good story of him. He said that, in their young days, when some strolling players came to Lichfield, our friend had fixed his place on the stage, and got himself a chair accordingly ; which leaving for a few minutes, he found a man in it on his return, who refused to give it back at the first entreaty. Mr. Johnson, however, who did not think it worth his while to make a second, took chair and man and altogether, and threw them all at once into the pit. I asked the Doctor if this was a fact. 'Garrick has not *spoiled* it in the telling,' replied he ; 'it is very near true, to be sure.'"

Johnson is said to have affirmed, that "a man who would make a pun, would pick a pocket." Once, however, he accidentally made a singular one. A person who affected to live after the Greek manner, and to anoint himself with oil, was one day mentioned. Johnson, in the course of conversation on the singularity of his practice, gave him the denomination of "this man of *Greece*,—or *grease*, as you please to take it."

A gentleman venturing to say to Johnson, "Sir, I wonder sometimes that you condescend so far as to attend a city club ;" "Sir," replied the Doctor, "the great chair of a full and pleasant club is, perhaps, the throne of human felicity."

"I shall never forget," remarks Miss Reynolds, "with what regret he spoke of the rude reply he made to Dr. Barnard, on his saying that men never improved after the age of forty-five. 'That is not true, sir,' said Johnson; 'you, who perhaps are forty-eight, may still improve, if you try. I wish you would set about it; and I am afraid,' he added, 'there is great room for it.' And this was said in a large party of ladies and gentlemen at dinner. Soon after the ladies withdrew from the table, Dr. Johnson followed them; and, sitting down by the lady of the house, he said, 'I am very sorry for having spoken so rudely to the Dean.' 'You very well may, sir.' 'Yes,' he said, 'it was highly improper to speak in that style to a minister of the Gospel; and I am the more hurt on reflecting with what mild dignity he received it.' When the Dean came up into the drawing-room, Dr. Johnson immediately rose from his seat, and made him sit down on the sofa by him, and with such a beseeching look for pardon, and with such fond gestures—literally smoothing down his arms and his knees—tokens of penitence, which were so graciously received by the Dean as to make Johnson very happy, and not a little added to the esteem and respect he had previously entertained for his character."



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